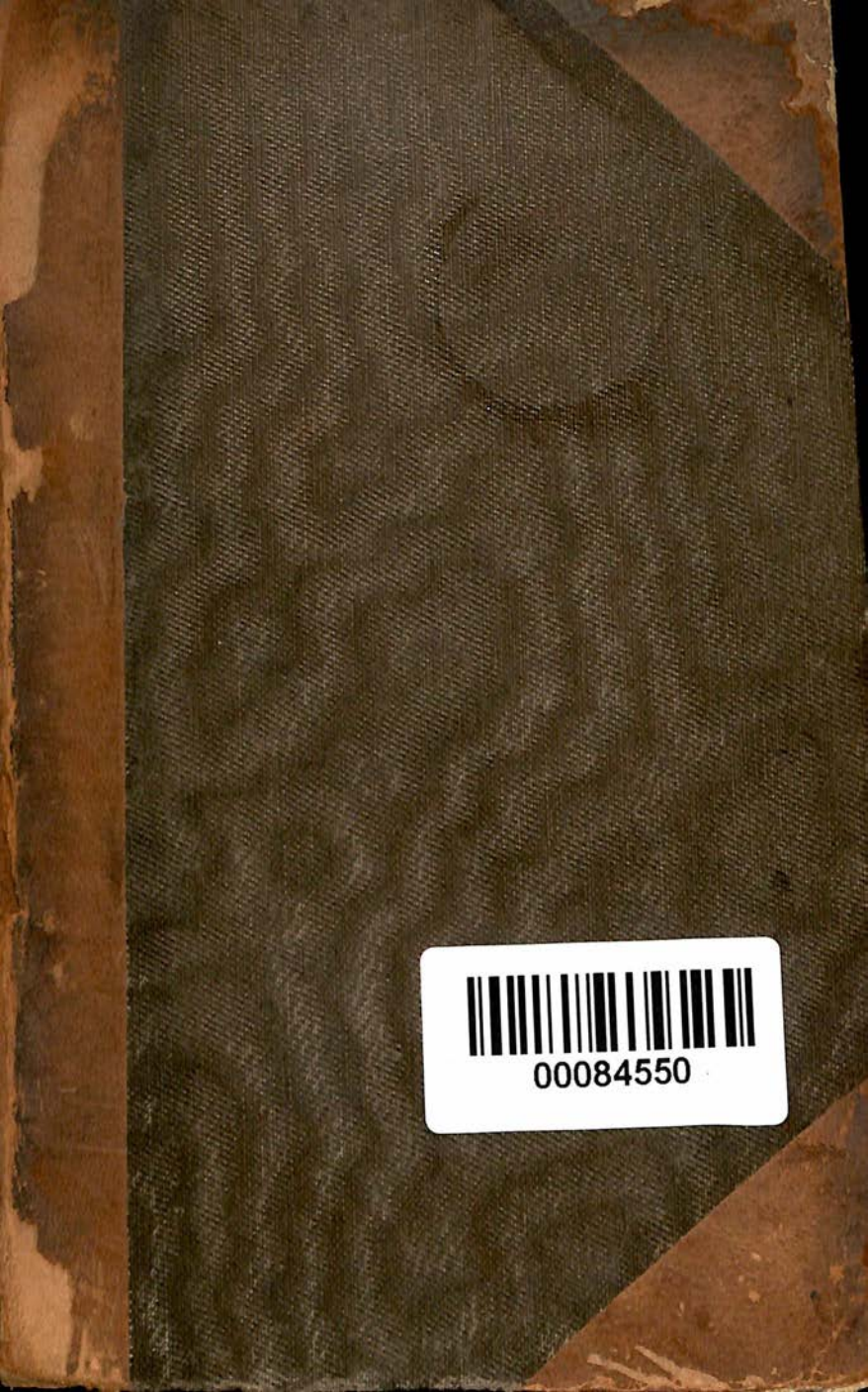
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OF THE

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ON TREK IN THE TRANSVAAL;

OR,

OVER BERG AND VELDT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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ON TREK IN THE TRANSVAAL;

OR,

OVER BERG AND VELDT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY

HARRIET A. ROCHE.

WITH MAP OF ROUTE.

84550

SECOND EDITION.

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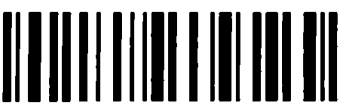
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Dedicated by Permission

TO THE PRESIDENT,

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF MANCHESTER,

THE COUNCIL AND THE FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE,

AND AS INSEPARABLE FROM IT TO THE MEMORY OF

ALFRED R. ROCHE,

one of its earliest promoters, and its first Honorary Secretary, to whom was most dear the success of a Society, formed with the earnest desire to aid by its influence in riveting still more closely the loving links which already bind the Mother Country to her scattered children in other lands. He was not spared to witness the large measure of success which has already crowned its efforts, but I, who am left behind, and who trust, God willing, to see the very fullest realization of his hopes, wish to dedicate to the Institute he loved so well, this first simple effort of my pen.

HARRIET A. ROCHE.

PREFACE.

"ANNEXATION of the Transvaal! Where *is* the Transvaal?" many exclaim who certainly look as if the whereabouts of that or any other place ought to be no geographical puzzle to them, and "Another Colony! and where be it?" I overheard a fustian-clad and somewhat ill-conditioned-looking individual mutter. "Why, what do us want with another Colony? Ain't the old hen done hatching yet?" meaning, I suppose, Britannia, and speaking of that time-honoured and revered lady as if she were only a barn-door fowl!

Another Chick! and why not? Moreover

what would the poor mite do if this same good old foster-mother hen did not spread out her wings to give it warmth and shelter, to fend for it and to feed it? It has been in sore straits of late, little venturesome thing, and now gladly responds like a sensible bird to the welcome "cluck! cluck!" which means to it help for the present, and protection and prosperity in the happy future, which I, for one, venture to predict for it.

Hearing the foregoing, exclamations and many similar ones also, set me communing with myself somewhat after the following manner:—"You have been to the Transvaal. You have scraps and scriblets many, written by the way, and during your few months of residence there, and you have your journal with its more detailed account of your varied experiences. Why not turn out the budget? Expand, nay, condense its contents if you

prefer it, but at any rate tell any who may care to read, what you have already told your own more immediate circle of friends, of this quaint and far-away territory upon the South African Veldt.

"You may have nothing new to relate to the few who have gone over the same ground, but think of those who have not done so, and who, now that the flag of old England floats over Pretoria, might like to visit it too. Who can tell them better than one who has traversed the road, how best to set about the journey, what to do, and what to leave undone? Don't be churlish. Even if you get a little laughed at for your mistakes, you may save others from making the same," &c., &c.

These and similar arguments have so far overcome my scruples—bashful ones for the most part—that if Messrs. Sampson Low & Co., who of course will know a great deal

better than I do, whether my notes are worth more general reading, consent to print them, I consent to publish them, and I will only add that the public, or shall I say "the gentle reader," is most heartily welcome to them.

H. A. R.

10*th June*, 1877.

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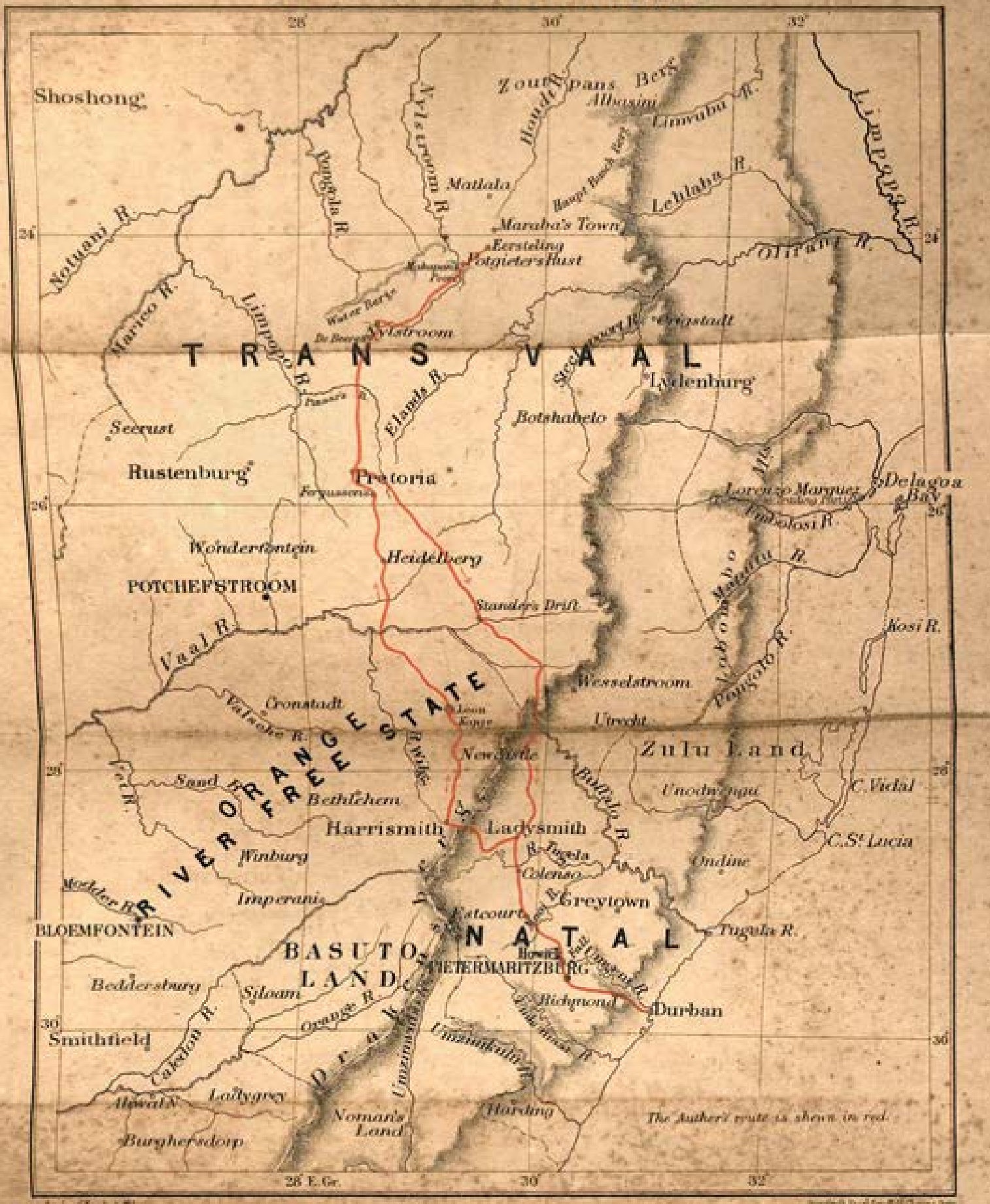
ON TREK IN THE TRANSVAAL.



London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington.

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

ON TREK IN THE TRANSVAAL;

OR,

OVER BERG AND VELDT IN S. AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

Which is chiefly Introductory.

No one goes anywhere, now-a-days, quite without an object, so we, being by no means exceptional individuals, had our motive, as a matter of course; that is to say, my husband had one of sufficient importance to induce him to undertake this journey, of which I am about to tell, and my motive was a natural consequence of his. I went because he went, and because there were no very potent reasons why I should stay behind.

It was a bright, clear-skied morning, early enough in the year for Winter to be still sufficiently vigorous to hold her own against

sweet Spring's feebler efforts for bare existence, when Time, the tiresome and inexorable, warned us that if we seriously contemplated reaching the Transvaal, we must at once take the preliminary and necessary measure of making a start for it.

The hall had been cleared to the very last package of the luggage which had gradually gathered within it, and where it might have added to our importance as travellers, but where it had sorely incommoded us as individuals. Now it was piled by willing hands upon the cart which was to convey it to our little branch-line station to London. I had seen two able-bodied women perform feats of strength in their struggles with refractory box-lids, and I had heard handy John summoned in nearly every case to the rescue before the final "snick" testified to their well-deserved triumph. It was not that, all things considered, we had a great deal of luggage, indeed it was below rather than above the allowance permitted to passengers by the Union Line, and we had been guided by those who knew something of the country

to which we were going, in our selection of what to take, but we found by after-experience that we had too much. However, more of this anon. Where this seven-headed monster—the actual number of our cases—had again to be tackled was when we reached Durban, in Natal, and there, if any care to follow me, they shall learn what we did with it.

We have still to say good-bye to our dear old Hertfordshire home, and truly, friends, I find it nearly as hard to do so again on paper as I did on that spring morning, when it looked so beautiful—beautiful in our eyes ever, and beautiful also even to the more casual observer as, driving along our country lanes, the old, white-faced manor-house somewhat grandiloquently peeped out from its fine old trees, and seemed to claim some credit to itself, for having been required as far back as the reign of Stephen to contribute candles and sundries to the old church a little below it. We had looked into every nook and cranny of our home. We had given our pets in turn the tit-bit they each especially co-

veted, and seldom failed to get daily from their master's hand, but from whose dear hand,—how can I write it?—they can never have caress or dainty more. We had heard King Charlie neigh his loud "good-bye," for had I, as usual, driven him to the station, a certain little mist which kept gathering in my eyes with vexatious pertinacity warned me that between us we might get into mischief on the road. Therefore we parted with him in his stall. Impatient Tommy, even in his old age so full of his antics and vagaries that he might pass for a young pony if he would only keep his mouth shut, impatient Tommy, my bonnie white Tommy, munched his last bit of sugar and pawed greedily for more, shaking his mane at us by way of parting salute. Even the rooks, respectable birds, had had their table laid for them by the same provider upon the croquet lawn. They had gathered up their crumbs after their usual suspicious wheeling-about-before-making-up-their-minds fashion, and had clamorously and collectively departed to other scenes with just a farewell caw. The moor-

fowl in the pond had glided away as noiselessly as was their wont. The light-brown squirrel, and the one which we called, by way of distinction, the dark-brown squirrel, gambolled about provokingly closer to our windows than before. Carlo, the little dog adored below-stairs, but barely tolerated above, had joined, as usual, the morning procession around the garden, of himself and the two cats, taking sly snacks, greedy, because well-fed beast, from the bread then lavishly thrown to all pensioners. Carlo provoked me by what looked suspiciously like exuberant joy at our departure, as if he felt a good time was coming for him, and that he, and not the white cat, should have full possession of a reserved seat on a certain soft cushion, from which she had valiantly and frequently driven him by a successful course of well-directed ear-boxings. Big Rover was to be permitted to see the last of us, and his canine mind had yet to grasp the fact that there was anything unusual in our flitting .

Our village good-byes had all been said some days ago. Real "God be with you's!"

from honest hearts, accompanied by little bunches of violets and primroses, or home-tended flowers from tiny cottage gardens. "We thought, may-be you'd like 'em, ma'am, seeing they comes from Pelham;" or, "They're no great things, sir, but they smells sweet, and they're Pelham flowers, anyhow." Dear hearts, so lovingly grateful for such little neighbourly helps as we could give, your flowers are withered, and many of my brighter hopes are, like them, withered too; but as a scent still hovers round these poor crushed blossoms, so while life lasts will there ever remain to me a fragrance from a past filled to overflowing with memories of a nobler life, in whose innermost thoughts I, all unworthy of it, was so lavishly allowed to share.

* * * * *

I ought perhaps to make some apology for devoting so much of my opening chapter to what at first sight may not seem to have much to do with my subject, but, in truth, it has a good deal to do with it. If we had not left "home," how could we in the nature of things ever have finally got to the Transvaal?

And this actual getting away seemed a deed as difficult of accomplishment as when, with broken disselboom and embedded wheels, we stuck in the mud on the banks of the Vaal River, and knew that the getting out of the mess would be managed *somehow*, as indeed it was. Oh! have patience with me, and all in good time I will take you in imagination where we went in the flesh, over Berg and Veldt, to England's new possession, the last child of our dear old Mother Country, which, by its ready acceptance of her protection and care, adds a practical testimony to the truth of the old adage, "Union is strength!"

As I have lingered so long at the very threshold as it were of my story, I must make all the greater haste over the intermediate ground, so as to land ourselves and readers as little tardily as may be in South Africa.

Steamer experiences are pretty much alike, go where you will. Although sorely tempted to transcribe some of my jottings on board, I refrain because I am bound to get "On Trek" as quickly as possible. We saw our

whale, and watched him spout; we saw our shark, and indeed we nearly caught him; had a fair allowance of porpoises, flying fish, and "Portuguese Men-of-War," with their fairy sails above, and treacherous feelers below. These were our outsiders. Within, we had our irrepressible talker, whose tongue was as impossible to stop in its career as the far-famed leg of Rotterdam. We had our peppery fellow-passenger, who played off old chatter-box to his own gratification and for the general entertainment, and who was forgiven his sparks of temper in consideration of his sparks of wit. We had our great eaters, whose feats at meal-times were simply appalling; and we had our dainty feeders, who seemed to grow leaner under our very eyes. Duly represented was the orthodox and very gentlemanlike middle-aged beau, and the younger ditto, in that fluffy and callow stage of manhood which always moves me to extreme pity. The younger only got "innings" when the older hand had unguardedly come on deck without due application of that "wash which is not a

dye!" or had that unbecoming greenish hue born of sea-sickness, and which no cosmetique can conceal. Whether you are going to the Transvaal or not, or, if only to the Cape or Natal, and are given to qualms and flirtation, as you *must* get through that frisky and most uproarious Bay of Biscay, take my advice, keep to your berth until the bout be over, and you can, with healthful tints restored, break a fair lance for your lady's favour, temporary or otherwise, with Jones minor, whose digestion neither winds nor waves can upset.

Once through the Bay who does not forget the petty miseries its boisterous spirits have entailed, in the contemplation of the calmer glories of a tropical sea? or once having seen them who *can* forget those gorgeous sun-risings and sun-settings, that wondrous moon with its subtle links of sympathy with mortal moods! those stars which in spite of their bewildering numbers, seem each to have its friendly message of cheer and hope, and its promise of good-comradeship henceforth in the new and beautiful land to which we are bound?

I have hustled out of sight my notes of our little "outing" at Madeira, with those funny diving boys and their "One sheeling, gentleman! one seex-pence, sar!" taking one's breath away with their performances for either sum. Of our stay in Cape Town and what we saw there, of Wynberg and Constantia, and what we tasted there: dub a wine "Cape," and it is like giving a dog a bad name, for indeed Cape wines *are* delicious, though frequently adulterated in England, I believe, and so a good thing is lost to us. Of Algoa Bay, with its town, Port Elizabeth, of Mossul Bay, and East London, I have laid my notes of these places, I repeat, on a shelf out of my reach for two reasons. One is that more practised pens than mine have written about each and all before, and the other, that I must get "On trek" as soon as I can.

At Cape Town we transhipped into the smaller coasting vessel for Natal. This change is sometimes made at Algoa Bay, but both lines of steamers arrange for the transhipment being as little unpleasant as possible.

At this point I think I may venture to transcribe, just as I wrote them, some pages from my note-book, premising this only, that I have reason to modify in some degree what may seem just a little unjust or over-strained, and which might mislead.

For instance, a friend who read the account of our first drive in Natal, inquired, "Have they no better roads than that?" the impression left by it upon his mind making him draw that conclusion. The road to Durban from the Point is a very good one, and neither pains nor expense are spared in improving it, and making it even better; but our "Jehu" chose a short cut, and perhaps was near-sighted! who knows?

Another friend who knew Natal well, thus criticized my "first night" there. "I'll give in to your spiders and your cockroaches, besides a few other insects of which you say nothing; but oh! Mrs. R——, *not* as large as a *full* grown mouse! Come, now, confess to a bit of exaggeration there!" Reader, I do confess that it is an exaggeration to malign a cockroach, by comparing him to a mouse

which has reached years of discretion; but I *have* seen a mouse so tiny that a Natal cockroach would look a monster by its side. Pray see my distinction! Moreover, one is often aghast at first sight at what one soon becomes by constant contact thoroughly familiarized with. Neither would I cast a slur upon excellent Mrs. X., who most undoubtedly battles with these tiresome intruders right valiantly; but her house is near the bay, which subjects it to more frequent visits than if she were farther up the town, and the smell of food from the ever-recurring mealtimes tempts these prowlers to feast upon the remnants of the plentiful fare Mrs. X—— always hospitably provides for her guests. There are many good hotels and boarding-houses in Durban, and the difficulty of finding rooms vacant at Mrs. X——'s, proves that no one considers that she has any unusual share of the insect pests to be met with in every hot climate. But perhaps my extracts had better form another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Natal—Durban Bay—Our first drive—Our first night in the colony.

10*th May*, 1875.—We are steaming along famously, and expect to arrive in Durban Bay to-night, but whether the "Zulu" can get over the Bar or not remains to be seen. Coast bold and fine, with tempting-looking sandy beaches every here and there. There appear to be more trees, especially as we near Durban. Through the glass we can see monkeys climbing about the branches, alone and in groups. The woods here are said to be full of them. These thick forests, reaching down to the shore, give it more the appearance of a river's bank than of a sea-coast. Our two charges wake up considerably as they near their native land. Their eyes

sparkle with interest as they try to make out the spot at which their home "must be," for their father has changed residences during their school-time in England. They are wondering whether papa can come out to meet them, whether he will find them changed, or much grown, &c., with other natural little "wonderings," to which such a meeting after such a separation would naturally give rise.

Two p.m.—We have rounded the Bluff, which stands out in bold relief, lighthouse crowned, at the entrance to Durban Bay; but here, we are told, we may have to bide rather more than "a wee," for the Bar will have no pity upon us for at least another two hours more, so the "Zulu" has come to a halt in what is termed the outer anchorage. One of her Majesty's ships is close alongside, and some of her officers came off at once to obtain English news. A—— handed them his latest *Times*, and other papers were added and thankfully accepted. Eager eyes soon spied out the little tug-boat putting out from the wharf, the excitement waxing greater and

greater as she neared the "Zulu." "There's So-and-so, and So-and-so, and there's papa!" cried Minnie and Teddy, in almost a breathless whisper. "Yes, there's Mr. L——," said several others; "you might know him almost at any distance." I could have told him to be Minnie's father anywhere, so strongly does she resemble him. A busy scene ensued. Mail-bags crowded the deck, to be despatched instantly; greetings exchanged between relatives, friends, and acquaintances; questions asked and answered; laughter and sighs mingling strangely. Although I had neither part nor lot in either, still, I felt stirred thereby. At four o'clock we got over the Bar, and came to anchor within the safe haven of Durban Bay—as lovely a bay as any other part of the world could well show. Arrived at the landing-stage in a small boat, we found that we were too late for the train to the town. This train consists of a few carriages and trucks, and runs to and fro many times daily between the town and Point, and a little further along the coast. It is the only railway in Natal—

a colony which needs one sadly—and is conducted upon very primitive principles, early closing being one of them.

Mr. L—— kindly assumed the full direction of our movements, as well as those of his own party. His wife and younger children were grouped together to greet their dear ones as they stepped ashore. Mr. L——'s mule-waggon, it was evident, could not carry a single individual over and above themselves, but our friend assured us that he would arrange for us. This he did very kindly as to intention, but after a manner which has served to imprint our first drive in Natal indelibly upon our memories.

A neighbour with his "trap" happened to be at the Point, and consented to give us a lift to the boarding-house at which Mr. L—— had already considerately engaged rooms for us. The "trap" turned out to be a very loosely constructed cart, like a large wooden tea-tray on wheels, through each plank of which we could see every inch of ground over which those crazy steeds, driven by a crazier driver, wildly took us. A—— and myself

were seated side by side with the latter, a young girl occupying a board laid crosswise behind us. The tide being low, our road led over the firm compact sand, which hardly bore a trace of our erratic course. A large hewn tree lay close to where we had to turn off from our starting-place to the sands below, but with ample space for three carts abreast, properly driven, to pass by without grazing an inch of it.

Our man took us a flying leap over this, unseating the young girl, who fell a helpless ump upon the floor (she might almost have gone through it had she been thinner, or the gaps a trifle wider), and causing A—— and myself to take a bound into the air, each seizing the other after the most absurd and futile fashion, grappling with one another as if each thought the other accountable for the involuntary caper we had cut!

The absurdity of the whole thing, and the droll figures we must have appeared to those who were looking on, and who, indeed, rushed forward as with one impulse to pick us up, a capsize seeming inevitable, so tickled my

fancy that I turned my head (once assured that it was still in its usual place) away from my companions, and laughed as noiselessly as I could, until the tears fairly streamed down my cheeks. It made it the more difficult to restrain myself from the occasional peeps I took at my husband's injured expression of face. He could see no fun in it at all, whilst I could see nothing else. My usual want of dignity took the sting out of it, I suppose, but it by no means took the ache out of my poor bones, or the pain out of my side. As long as we kept to the sands, our rigmaroly progress mattered little, but presently our Jehu turned off into what seemed an untrodden bush. He, however, charged it with as much confidence as if it had been a finely macadamized road. The undergrowth had been slightly cut away, and heavy wagons may have gone over it before, but the ruts and stumps, and elevations and declensions, and holes and carriage-traps generally, made it, even with the most careful driver, a dangerous thoroughfare. Not so thought our man; and, Johnny Gilpin's ride was nothing

to our drive, thought I, as each instant I expected that we should be pitched out like rubbish from a gardener's wheelbarrow. Once I ventured mildly to expostulate, inquiring if people in Natal made it a rule in driving to go over every bad place instead of avoiding it, as being pleasanter to themselves, easier for their horses, and less likely to increase their yearly bills at the wheelwright's. He eyed me with great contempt, saying that I "would soon learn a thing or two if I stayed long in Natal." I replied that I hoped my bones would strengthen or lengthen, or grow acclimatized somewhat, so that I might bear the violent exercise in store for me whene'er I took my drives abroad in this highly interesting colony. We continued our mad career to the very gate of the boarding-house, actually without an upset.

We drew up with one wheel wedged tightly against the lamp-post, and with a sound as of a broken *something*. That, however, was Jehu's fault, not ours; and I felt considerable relief when I found myself and my good

man safely standing, bruised, but unbroken, at our journey's end.

We arrived at our temporary home too near the dinner-hour to enable us to do more than make a very hasty toilet, not even to change our heavier garments, which we had had again to assume on board the "Zulu," the sea breezes having become quite fresh enough to render warmer clothing desirable.

We were offered the choice of two rooms, one on the ground floor, which had an appearance threatening stuffiness, and one upstairs much larger and brighter, which we selected on the spot. The L——'s had meanwhile arrived, and the sound of the gong bade us to dinner. One long centre and one side table were filled as we entered the dining-room. The hum-hum of subdued conversation rose and fell sometimes monotonously, sometimes spasmodically. Our hostess, buxom and hearty, took her share, addressing now Mr. Jones, now Mrs. Smith, now Mr. Brown, now Mrs. Robinson, in a kind of hap-hazard, slap-dash manner, worthy of all praise, combined, as it was, with a

proper eye to the needful business of the moment. It mattered not in the slightest whether Brown, Jones, or Robinson replied to any question or remark beyond the necessary "Yes, please," or "No, thank you," if Jim the Kafir, Sam the Coolie, or Tom the little Oomfan,—all equally "Boys,"—required a little touching up to hasten their movements or to tone down their zeal. It was "a caution," as the Yankees say, to see the activity with which those "Boys," the turbaned Coolie, or the woolly-headed Kafir went the pace around that dinner-table, charging at one another, ducking and diving to avoid collisions with dishes, popping corks within an inch of your chair, some of which flew like missiles about the room, keeping one eye all the while comically fixed upon their mistress, who had the hardest time of all. She had a regular code of signals, to a knowledge of which her agile waiters had been duly brought. These were eked out by words as she was passed and repassed in this her hour of trial. There was no lack of food. Indeed one could have been satisfied with

less in calmer moments. As dinner progressed I felt considerably incommoded by my warm clothing, and longed to escape to the verandah, where an easy cane chair was temptingly placed in full view of the lovely bay, the waters of which were just rippling calmly as those of a lake, as the faint breeze stirred them into motion. By intuition our hostess divined my suffering, or perhaps she saw others gasp as well as myself. Certain it is that at one and the same moment she afforded me relief and cleared away a mystery which had divided my thoughts with my dinner until then. She fixed the eye of one of her watchful servitors, a lithe-looking, finely featured, active young Coolie, who disappeared noiselessly, and presently there began to move slowly and evenly like the pendulum of a clock, a long pole with a deep chintz frill or flounce attached to it, and which resembled the vallance of a gigantic bed more than anything else. This I had observed suspended from the ceiling over our heads, but had not been able to discern why it was so placed. This improvised punkah

was a clever invention of Mrs. X——'s, and, unornamental as it was, I felt thankful that Providence had bestowed upon her an inventive genius.

If our first drive in Natal will never be forgotten by us, neither will be our first night there also.

"What are those black things like large lumps of bee's-wax up on the wall near the ceiling?"

"Oh! those are only old hornet's nests!" was the reply.

"Ugh!" shuddered I. "But please come back, Mrs. X——," I shouted, as I heard the good lady's departing footsteps after she had bidden me a kind good night, "Would you tell me what those—those things are walking about under the bed now where they had seemed to scamper off for shelter as we brought the light into the room?"

"Why, those are only cockroaches," quoth she, evidently thinking me full of fads and fancies, and making off speedily lest I should interrogate her farther.

Only cockroaches! yet there were some of them as large as full-grown mice! I placed a chair at the foot of the bedstead, shook my skirts well, seated myself on the iron framework with my feet upon the chair, and gathered my garments together much as one does on boggy ground. I wanted a good "think," and to tutor myself as soon as I could into a toleration of, even if I could not attain to a positive liking for, the mixed company of insects, and even reptiles, into which we should for some months to come most probably be thrown. From my perch I saw the enemy approach, stealthily and warily at first, then boldly and more boldly, in gathering numbers. "'Tis the March of the Cameron men!" hummed I, in subdued tones. I hear the rattle of their armour and the clatter of their hoofs. Cockroaches of all sizes, from that of the grown-up mouse to the tiniest of black-beetles! Surely the whole tribe have turned out in honour of our arrival in Natal, and have come to bid us welcome. "Not we indeed, vain bipeds," replied they, by unmistakable signs. "We

are only come to gobble up the biscuit crumbs you dropped upon the floor when you emptied your bag before dinner. You have eaten and are satisfied, and we shall not be satisfied until we have eaten too." The busy herd lost not a moment, and cleared away the last crumb before starting off for pastures new, too many remaining to be altogether pleasant. Moths nearly as big as bats flew about within the room, whilst bats bigger than the biggest moths flapped their wings against the lighted panes outside. "Down came a spider and sat down beside her!" One spider only frightened Miss Muffet away. I think poor Miss Muffet would have been "beside herself" had she come across, or had they come across her, more properly speaking, any of these gross, able-bodied, unwieldy creatures, which clawed the air like crabs, and looked capable of giving a grip strong enough to have and to hold whatever might have the misfortune to fall into their clutches. The getting into bed was not accomplished without due precaution, and

after a shaking of one's feet, much as a cat shakes her hind legs after a wetting, and our slumber world, when we fitfully visited it, seemed alive with *creatures*.

CHAPTER III.

Treats of what to take and what to leave behind—Advice to any who may intend visiting the Transvaal—Durban—By 'Bus to Pieter Maritzburg—Queen's Birthday week at the capital—Sir Garnet Wolseley's ball.

May 11*th*, 1875.—Daylight ushered itself in with a chorus of sights and sounds foreign to English ears. "Pad, pad," went shoeless feet, and a fumbling, rather than a knocking at the panel, announced the early coffee, handed in through the partly-opened door by a long black paw. This matutinal draught at a very early hour is one of South Africa's most sacred institutions—born of the early rising induced by the climate, and worthy of imitation elsewhere, independent of similar cause. Dogs barked and cocks crowed, and

South African cocks crow more vociferously and unintermittently than cocks in any other part of the world, I am convinced. ("Ah! you have never been to Borneo," said a friend to whom I once made the same remark.) The gong for breakfast was the most welcome sound of all, for I was eager to attack the work before me, i. e. the reducing in bulk and number those dreadful cases, which I had already begun to wish were owned by any but ourselves. I found a lovely bunch of roses on my plate at table, with a card of kindly greeting. Natal *has* roses. Nature knows no stint in leaf and flower, and decks her gifts here with hues with which few countries can compare.

The Agent, Mr. Parker, who by pre-arrangement had met us on board, and who helped us efficiently from that moment until we left for Pieter Maritzburg, told us of the necessity for forwarding anything we should require there, or for our up-country journey, with but little delay, as transport was an affair of time, and goods despatched from Durban frequently turned up in Maritzburg,

a distance of a little over fifty miles, ten days or a fortnight afterwards.

Letters and telegrams of "Welcome to Natal" had already reached us, and amongst the former an invitation to the Club ball.

Mr. Parker said, "If you have any intention of accepting that, you must despatch your portmanteaux to-day." We did so, but the Club ball was a thing of the past when they arrived at our hotel at the capital.

Guided by the Agent the business of weeding out our belongings began. "It all depends, you see, upon the size of the wagon in which you travel up country. If you have a large buck-wagon you will have ample space for many things which would be of the very greatest use to you when there, but which in a smaller conveyance would incommode you greatly on the road. In the latter you would have little enough room for yourselves and bare necessaries."

(Travelling "light" *may* mean speed, but oh! reader, it means certainly cramp and closeness, dearth and dreariness, and a curtailment of ordinary comfort, which can be

borne smilingly, if not with hilarity, for there's a drollness about it, too, especially to a looker-on, for a limited time. But try it for six weeks at a stretch, and, believe me, if your temper and nerves stand the test, never doubt your capacity to endure, or think that Job was quite such a marvel that you need despair of emulating him, should such be your ambition. This interlude has no business here at this point, but it has come of an un-Job-like frame of mind, aroused at re-reading notes which tell of the good things we left primarily at Durban, secondarily at Pieter Maritzburg, and which we often longed for in the Transvaal.

"This side-saddle, for instance, am I likely to require it?" asked I, remembering a journey across the prairies of Minnesota, when, as a girl, a ride of 600 miles or so seemed a feat scarce worth the telling of, but which I certainly could not have accomplished without that useful article.

"Well, when you get up there you *may* be glad of it, and I believe there *are* horses in the district," &c. &c.

Remembering the nuisance that saddle had been to pack, for "nothing would go in comfortable alongside it," our John had declared, I had a sense of neglected duty in leaving it behind, without even using it in South Africa. Such was its fate, however, and from that moment I never saw it more. All superfluities of wearing apparel both my husband and I agreed to leave behind. One or two boxes, to meet our needs should we be delayed for a few days in Pieter Maritzburg, and be asked to partake of hospitalities there, must be filled and forwarded. It was done accordingly, to the breathless admiration of Mrs. X——'s good Kafir, "Jim," who, during the process, stole up the stairs at intervals to gaze surreptitiously. Half my work was achieved upon the landing, and now and again, if his whole body, time not permitting, did not present itself, his nose would reach the level of my field of operations, and his thick lips would emit a "click" of appreciation, whilst the whites of his eyes rolled with an eloquence requiring no vocabulary to explain. The few dresses of quiet, almost

Quaker-like hue, upon which I prided myself, had no attractions for him, but a scarlet flannel dressing-jacket, a pair of coloured blankets, a scrap of ribbon, and an "end" of red tape! (Can you realize a craving for that?) had charms for Jim, which without an interpreter, he contrived to make clear to me. Jim had his modest pickings, but they would have been dear at half-a-crown.

It seemed difficult to believe that we could possibly require the large quantity of rugs and wraps which took up so large a portion of our limited space, but time proved that we needed every one, and we should often have been thankful for more during our nights of cold exposure on the Veldt. Whilst I discarded everything that had claims only to the ornamental, I reserved good, serviceable articles, which could stand wear and tear, with enough of under-linen to suffice as should our stay be one of months instead of only weeks, as it afterwards proved to be. I had been warned of the rough treatment it would undergo at the hands of Kafir washers, so I left behind me all mere prettinesses, and

chose garments "severely simple" in style, and by no means in their earliest youth, so that they might go into the rag-bag, and not cumber us on our return. Flannel shirts for my husband, with only coloured linen ones, and a good store of woven vests; one large leather bag, and one small one, one portmanteau, and one roll of rugs and pillows were the exact sum of our joint baggage for the Transvaal.

We were assured that a compact little camp-kettle, or portable canteen, for which we had only paid thirty shillings, but which contained nearly every requisite for two people, would be a useless encumbrance. Blindly we trusted to those who we naturally concluded knew better than we, what we did, and what we did *not* want. The argument which conquered our common-sense-clinging to that kettle was this, that if we had a light wagon and horses (as indeed it seemed almost certain that we should), we should take our regular stages nearly the whole way to Pretoria, and thus always have a roof over our heads; that

camping out would be the exception, not the rule. Our advisers had only had such experience of up-country journeying as the post-cart afforded, when a constant change of horses or mules makes this programme a fairly reliable one, and therefore they spoke according to their lights. Neither they nor we could predict, what really so often afterwards befell us, through the almost fiend-like obstinacy with which our animals would either refuse to move at all when miles away from any of the far-apart so-called "hotels," or the stupidity with which they would knot themselves and their harness into a "confusion too confounded" for daylight to see us out of the hobble. Through the kindness of friends our precious canteen reached us in time for our *return* journey, when very valuable we found it.

I strongly advise all who may contemplate a visit to South Africa, whilst they avoid superfluities, to be well provided with necessaries, compactly packed. Let them bring a light macintosh—a lady's should be silk lined; a folding india rubber bath—one not requiring inflation is best; an expanding macintosh

basin, with a bag to hold it, the soap, towel, &c., too, with loops to hang it by, and above all, a hammer and nails with which to make their own little extra tidinesses after everything is supposed to be duly arranged by the wagon outfitter; a good stout ball of string, needle, thread, spare buttons, and tapes. All such sundries, common sense would suggest, but a reminder can do no harm. Tinned food for travelling is most requisite; and so is a spirit-lamp, wherewith to heat your coffee or tea when the cruel veldt fails to supply you with any fuel more lasting than a wisp of dry grass, or the pitiful leavings of the old camp-fire of some one who has gone on before you, and who has been in as great need as yourself of the wherewithal to make a blaze. Bring big safety pins! when your canvas bags begin their mad dance against the sides of the wagon, or your hat takes a flying leap from the peg upon which you have placed it, or your curtains persist in gaping apart—bring out your store of precious "safetys," and thank me for the hint.

Those who have no thought of visiting the Transvaal, may find too much sameness in my record of our day-to-day experiences. Their remedy is easy: let them skip what is tiresome to them. But let those who contemplate following in our steps read every word, for thus they may profit by our mistakes, and avoid our mishaps.

The Natal route will probably be for some time to come the favourite one, or so it is generally supposed. Those whose frames are not made of cast iron, will, if they are wise, eschew that dreadful post-cart with its harum-scarum drivers. Tom Sayers, after one of his "rounds," could not look more bruised, discolored, or used up than a passenger in the Natal post-cart straight through to Pretoria. So, go by wagon if you can, and choose also, if you consult your comfort and number more souls than one, the large buck-wagon of the country. The outlay is very heavy if you purchase one "right out," with its span of eighteen oxen at about 12*l.* a head; but they will probably fetch a fair price at the end of your journey,

and you could convey goods which would by their sale go far towards covering your expenses. Choose, if it be possible, the season for Veldt travelling, and make a bargain with one of the "Transport" drivers to convey you and your belongings. If you are alone, and can rough it with a small kit, needing no waiting upon, trusting to your gun for the wherewithal to fill your three-legged pot, it ought not to cost you much; and though you may be longer on the road, you arrive in condition for immediate work, instead of fit for the injury ward of the hospital which you will *not* find at its end. Do not dream of a light wagon, for however light, you must have six horses; even a two-wheeled Cape cart requires four, and it is not possible for the same animals to travel continuously so far, and for so many days without knocking up. The forage, when you can get it for so many mouths, nearly hustles you out of the vehicle. One of your horses may go lame—you cannot leave him, and he cannot follow. You may long to take him inside with you, anything, rather than be

delayed; but you find it already but too close quarters, if you have yielded to the pitiful petition of your tired pointer's pleading eyes for a lift! Mem: take a pointer, two if you can! but be careful of him if you love him, for an animal's life is precious in a climate different from that of his birth. Before starting from your English home, go to your village blacksmith, don his apron, and tinker and toil with him as much as he will let you, till you get a good notion of his trade. Go to your wheelwright, and get him to show you his trick of straightening a bent axle, how to box one, how to cure its crookedness, and to heal wheel illnesses generally. Haunt the bench of your neighbouring carpenter, till you get a wrinkle or two from him. Even your butcher and your baker might tell you something, that you may thank them for when thousands of miles away from them. Be a Jack-of-all-trades, with more than a smattering knowledge of each, and you will save your pocket as well as your patience thereby. You *may* get Kafir labour in plenty, but you may also have to go for

weeks without any. The servant-market is liable to fluctuations, and it is well to be independent thereof. White servants you will never have. Even if your social status in the old country be that of servitude (ever honourable), yet I venture to predict you will, like your neighbours, soon after arrival, be ordering about your "boys," and telling them to do in South Africa, what in England you would "think it shame" to see any one doing for you but yourself. Your wife, good, hard-working soul, who in her old home would slave at her washtub and scrub her floors cheerfully; here, if she be so lucky as to have floors at all, will make that lazy "Jim," or that provoking "Oomfan" clean them for her.

If only a band of sensible emigrants would come to this country, prepared to use their own hands, as if no black labour were to be had, they would reap riches in half the time than can be possible whilst they persist in making the sacrifice, it is that, and nothing, or very little else, to that dreadful Mrs. Grundy. What a busy-body

that ubiquitous woman is, and how delightful it would be if only some one could be found to snuff her out utterly. . . . .

With all our desire to hasten to the Transvaal it was impossible to spend even a few days in Durban without noting some of its beauties, as well as seeing some of its people. Only a few of the latter then, however. It was reserved for me afterwards, in my sore need of help and sympathy, to find it all, and more, in kindly Natal: in Durban, as in Maritzburg. Warm-hearted Natalians, I only half knew your worth at the time of which I write; and I knew less, and that only what a passing glimpse could show me, of your nice homes, with their refined and, in many instances, even elegant surroundings. Then you were mere acquaintances, now I am thankful that you will let me call you friends.

I am glad that, as I skim through my notes of 1875, now, in 1877, I can bring before my mind's eye more than one of your home pictures. The house by the bay, for instance, with its gathered group of fair young Durban girls, as deft as their opponents at the well-con-

tested game of bowls, which we graver folks watched from the broad verandah. I have only to *shut* my real eyes to see it all—the broad bay beneath, with the little upturned yacht which had just capsized in the shallows close in shore, and which everybody knew would soon be high and dry again, being well used to these treacherous little wind-spurts; the bright-hued flower-beds, and clever little rockeries, in unexpected nooks, with *such* ferns! the canoe, with its paddles ready for use, and "children-signs" about. What could a home want more anywhere?

You may well boast of your Berea, good folks at Durban. Is it not very beautiful, and very health-giving too? Your lungs, in fact, as the London parks are ours? What wonder that you build your pretty homesteads, and make your clearances amongst its trees, though you have nearly driven the monkeys away, and fairly scared into the wilds all bigger beasts, who not so many years agone claimed your range as theirs. You have made a wise selection for your lovely suburb, and even wiser you, oh! friends

at Sydenham, for are you not repaid by your still wider expanse of country, for your longer daily drive to town. Your four-legged "Paddy" trips it fast and daintily; and if he does not object, why should you?

Talk of progress—everything will follow in good time; but have you not already in your city your churches of all denominations, your public library, your clubs, your botanic gardens, your public offices, your gaol, your masonic halls, your banks, and your hotels? Have you not *some* street-lamps, and your slow, but sure little railway? and if your streets are ankle-deep in sand, and you are getting the better of that fast, are they not very broad and flanked on either side by shops and warehouses, of which no colony need be ashamed? And is not your big railway coming, the turning of the "first sod" of which has been so graphically described by an eye-witness? *Was* your sod really so brown and sunburnt as we are bid to believe? Some purblind Kafir must have lazily grubbed it from the side of one of your street-ditches instead of from any of the hundred-and-one

patches of greenery within arm's length of his spade.

14*th May*, 1875.—I doubt if we could call ourselves fairly "on trek" when we left Durban early this morning, by "'bus" for Maritzburg. "Passengers are requested not to take their seats until the driver is upon the box." Passengers do take their seats, in disobedience to this rule, and mishaps sometimes occur, as well they may, when the six steeds, fresh from their stable, do not always think it necessary to wait for that event before careering away towards the road over the Berea, which they must traverse at more sober pace presently.

Our driver to-day was treated with due respect, and so he ought to be, for he is a man of mark in Natal—nearly, if not quite, the oldest inhabitant, and a member of the Legislative Council. I have heard him since "keep the house in a roar," as quaint members have been known to do in more august assemblies time out of mind, he hardly moving a muscle of his face the while. Who does not know Mr. Cato, if he claims any acquain-

tance with Natal at all? To him we had what he called most potent letters from our own old friend, Sir John Scott, one of Natal's earlier Governors, to whose introductions we owed other courtesies than those of Mr. Cato. It seems to be an understood thing when he is a passenger by 'bus for Mr. Cato to take "the ribbons," upon his skill with which I believe he prides himself nearly as much as upon the many sterling good qualities he is so well known to possess. Strangers, who do not know this, are apt to be puzzled. One, for instance, to-day tendered him a fee of 1*s.*, believing him to be the *bonâ fide* driver, so aptly did he fit his assumed character. This mistake amused our friend no less than ourselves, and on the whole rather stimulated him to greater efforts.

The account of the Post-cart drive has already had its historian, and have I not mine, temptingly nigh at hand of its ditto by 'bus? but I must refrain—so Natal, I, who would fain linger in my record, even to prolixity, over you and your beauties, touching your little weaknesses very tenderly for

the love I bear you, must cut short my descriptions, and give paragraphs when I would like to give pages.

How often we changed our six horses, and how unclothed were the Kafir grooms who changed them, how their jargon could not be interpreted by a little boy whom I questioned, because their words were "naughty," is it not written? And the scenery—over the Berea—over the Inchanga! dip, dip! climb, climb! Oh, for an adjective wherewith to condense my admiration into one word! Dr. Johnson could not find me one, and Lady Barker has travelled over the same ground, and she has told you all about it.

Dusty and travel-weary we drew up at the door of the "Royal," at Maritzburg. Our craving was to tumble out of a bath and into a bed, as we had tumbled out of bed and into a bath in the morning. But no. Britons must dine; and dinner was ready, and it behoved us to get ready too. We did our best, but I am convinced our "best" was bad enough. How could we rid ourselves of pounds of dust with anything less than a broom,

and even our clothes-brush "was not" where we sought it. How I envied my husband his self-possession, when, ushered in to the well-filled dining-hall, he shook hands, or nodded in friendly greeting to one and another, many of them South African Fellows of the Royal Colonial Institute, whilst I crept in, cur fashion, behind him, with a womanlike-sense of the discomfort of not having "changed my dress." Puerile but not wholly uncommon, is it?

Of Pieter Maritzburg, though it was not then what it has become to me since, I must say something. "Sleepy Maritzburg!" quotha. Well, if it was asleep, it was, as we found it, after a very wide-awake fashion. A trifle, no, rather more than a trifle, I am afraid I must confess, drowsy as to business; but as to pleasure, it was open-eyed enough. It was our misfortune, seeing time was precious to us, to arrive during the Queen's birthday week. Natal is not one whit behind our other colonies in loyalty, and do not our colonies know how to honour our Queen?

We were eager to get "on trek," but, if the need of a nail might detain us to our

utter discomfiture, that nail could not have been produced in Maritzburg at the point of a pistol in Queen's birthday week.

"Go the day after to-morrow," said an old resident, "Not a bit of it. You won't go for a fortnight."

This sounded too ridiculous when such trifling additions were required to our equipments. We did *not* go for a fortnight, therefore it was clear that our informant knew Natal tradespeople better than we did.

Queen's birthday week means much to Pieter Maritzburg. It is the week of the year. It means races, it means bazaars, it means picnics, it means shows. We, between us, saw all of them, and jointly the ball. We were told that Sir Garnet Wolseley's courtesy had extended itself quite beyond the usual limits, but if more Jacks, Toms, and Harrys were present than should have been, I must own that they were very well behaved individuals indeed.

A ball in a hot country is as much an outdoor as an indoor affair. The verandah is part of the ball-room, and the big trees about

the grounds offer tempting nooks for strolling couples between the dances, so you may safely ask your hundred, really hoping they may accept, where you would tremble lest your fifty should say "yes," and fill your small drawing-room in Mayfair to overflowing.

Pieter Maritzburg lies in what looks like a hollow with hills mounting up some 1200 feet garrisoning it around. It is about the size of Durban, and the streets are laid out much as those of that town. The houses are many of them in shape like bungalows, lofty, and thatched, with broad cool verandahs, flower-garlanded into rustic beauty, even where they face upon the main streets. Some might be larger, but wages are dear and material costly, so there is a good reason for very large homes being rather the exception than the rule. Water-courses run through the streets with a cool, refreshing trickle, tempting one sorely to off-shoe and paddle therein on a hot day. The Kafirs are forbidden by law to stand in the streams, which, as they provide the citizens with drinking-water,

would hardly be improved, should such comfortable little dabbles be indulged in. Water is fetched early, and, after due filtering, is pure and good, the supply being unfailing. Those old Dutch pioneers knew how to choose well when they selected this spot for their city!

In a good central position stands the fine block of Government buildings, Legislative Assembly, Court House, and Post-Office, with its broad flight of steps. The streets are of good width and lighted by lamps, except on moonlight nights. The sale in the Long Market Square of weekly occurrence is well worth attending, and the Park, where the band plays, and which is Maritzburg's Rotton Row as well as Promenade, is good enough for any country, and will, as the trees grow in height and breadth, become even better than many can boast. The town *does* require water-carts, for the dust is its bane. The gardens are rich in vegetation, seringas, weeping-willows, blue gums, and bamboos. Fruit is abundant, and the ever-flowering rose-hedges meet your eye every-

where. Pieter Maritzburg has several churches; nearly all denominations have a place of worship, the Roman Catholics having a convent and school besides. Fort Napier looks down upon the town it protects, and when it has its large array of military tents pitched picturesquely about it, it gives life and variety to the capital of Natal. There are excellent colleges provided for girls as well as boys, a large airy hospital for the sick, with its staff of able physicians, and a gaol for its prisoners.

Government House has a cosy homelike air about it as it nestles in amongst its bowers of well-grown trees and shrubs, and, but for the sentry at either entrance, one could hardly fancy it other than the self-planned, self-selected, and therefore most comfortable abode of one of Natal's richer inhabitants. Just now, Queen's birthday week, and during the brief term of Sir Garnet Wolseley's governorship, it is the centre of attraction and the scene of unceasing hospitality.

"Drowning the independence of Natal in floods of champagne, eh?" quoted a jolly-

looking guest in the supper-room at the ball of balls. "Well, if he does, 'tis in uncommon good champagne at any rate! and I'll thank you, waiter, for another glass!"

With all that Sir Garnet has of the past and present to occupy his busy mind, he has a warm remembrance of old days in Canada, and in the short chat I had with him he ran over your names there, old friends, by dozens, and took up old links as if he had never dropped them.

This last paragraph warns me that I am running away from my subject, so I will halt here, and take up my notes from the morning of our leaving Maritzburg, and getting really "On Trek for the Transvaal."

CHAPTER IV.

Leave Maritzburg—The Town Hill—Trek to Howick—Umgeni Falls—Curry's—Mooi River—Of mishaps by the way, and of good Samaritans who helped us out of them—Estcourt or Bushman's River—Delay there—Arrival of post-cart—Colenso—The Drachensberg, or Dragon's Mountain—The Orange Free State—Harrismith—More mishaps by the way.

1*st June*, 1875.—Off at last! How can I describe our start from the yard of the Royal Hotel, where amongst the friends who gathered around to bid us adieu, so many stretched forth helping hands to perform what seemed like a magician's task, the compressing of what must go into spaces which appeared already filled to overflowing? The human freight had still to adjust itself, but where? A narrow wedge at one side of the wagon, but over which oozed packages, hard

as well as soft, attracted my attention. If I could but once get into that, and no one but myself could do so, that should be my nook! Thus my travelling companions, my husband, and the Rev. Mr. G——, who, on Missionary thoughts intent, was bound for Eersteling also, would be free to use the two small spaces left for passengers at the end of the wagon.

Our horses had been sent on to the top of the town hill, according to the good Natal fashion of starting with fresh beasts from thence, instead of wearing out the animals at the outset of a long "trek." For a certain fee oxen can be hired for this purpose. As our ten, that being the number judged necessary for us, gravely jogged out of Maritzburg with as true a calculation of their given number of minutes to their given amount of work, as a hired brougham-horse in London, I rejoiced that, thanks be, horses, not oxen, were to take us to the Transvaal. Before twenty-four hours had passed I mentally begged pardon of those patient animals, and sincerely wished that they, and *not* horses, had been deemed suitable

for the conveyance of ourselves and our belongings over the 600 miles of South African Berg and Veldt which lay before us.

The ascent of this hill occupied some hours, from its length and steepness, but, as its many windings afforded us peep upon peep of Maritzburg cradled beneath it, often quite unexpectedly, and always charming us by some fresh beauty of form or colour, the time slipped pleasantly by, so richly did it reward us for the delay. On the summit we found our boys—John, with his handsome dusky face lighted up by a smile of welcome, and Jim his lieutenant, smiling also, awaiting our coming, with the horses ready for inspanning. To "inspan" is to harness, or to yoke, as the case may be, your horses or your oxen, and to "outspan" is its reverse.

Oh, the dust! never did I see—no, I did not, could not see—such heavy clouds as the feet of the oxen cast up all around and about us as we travelled. The front curtain of the wagon was lowered, and seemed a tight fit, but it could not keep it out, so we scrunched and munched it and swallowed it all the way.

By an oversight the headstalls for the horses having been left behind, John has had to ride back to town for them. This is unfortunate, as it necessitates our remaining here for the night.

Howick, 2nd June.—This hotel is of a fair size; rooms unceiled and lofty, floors boarded—a luxury we shall soon lose; French windows opening out to the verandah, from which we see on the winding road over the hill wagon after wagon crawling along, dragged leisurely by its fourteen to eighteen oxen, according to its load. Here and there feed groups of animals, our own amongst them. Just at the foot of the hill is the Umgeni river, which we successfully crossed yesterday. Its current at times is very rapid, and quite lately a sad accident occurred, wagon, horses, and drivers going over the beautiful fall below of 340 or 350 feet. This fall Natal is proud of, and it is a great attraction to lovers of picnics, outings, and fine scenery. Its breadth is nothing very remarkable, and possibly other falls may be finer. To its *tout ensemble* it owes its charm.

4th June.—A chapter of accidents to tell of since my last entry. I am taking the opportunity of writing whilst a breakage in our trap is being repaired by a blacksmith, wheelwright, or rather a farmer who has the happy knack of turning his hand to anything, and who is good enough to do so upon our behalf. Most fortunate for us that our mishap occurred where it did. His wife has kindly made us welcome to her nice sitting-room, with its home-like look of comfort. It has its cheffonier, piano, sofa, carpet, &c.; also its harmonium, violin, and flute. We seem to have lighted in every sense upon another "harmonious blacksmith." The house is situated far away from any neighbours, seemingly there are none for miles, and in a picturesque spot in one of the windings of the hills. Ferns grow amongst the rocks and gullies, and water gushes out spasmodically every here and there. . . . .

But I must go back to our start from Howick yesterday. John's late return postponed our leaving that place until three p.m. It gets dark about six, and that quite sud-

denly, like the letting down of a curtain. Just out of Howick is a steep mountain, and up it our horses would not go. They jibbed, plunged, and kicked, the leaders, and the two behind them, turning round to look at us, getting their legs in a confused heap over the traces, the hind ones theirs over the pole. One was thrown down, and it seemed as if his plunges drove the rest wild. Some men passing with oxen (all help one another on the road, as a matter of course), came to the rescue, and by the time we were righted for a fresh start it was almost dark. We had thirteen miles to go to "Curry's Hotel," our next stopping-place. These performances continued at every hill, and we had to stop perpetually. Once or twice the wagon was stuck in one of the great gullies in the roads, from which no amount of whipping or urging could induce the horses to extricate us. When only five miles from Curry's, we agreed to walk, and to leave the boys, as we were told to be sure to do, to get out of the hobble as best they could. We reached the hotel at ten, and about an hour after that

our wagon arrived, the men, after taking out the leaders, having made the four drag the trap, (everything is a trap here,) the rest of the way. We were very tired, and glad to get to bed. Nothing could equal the perfect griminess, I know no word to express it better, of our garments. We had been told we must give up all idea of feeling clean from the moment of our start, and this seems likely henceforth to be our fate. The redness of the dust makes so deep a stain that it is very difficult to get it out. The inn was comfortable and the beds wholesome—a blessing we must not hope for much longer. We had the same difficulty over again at starting, in the morning; the leaders again at fault. Our boys said, "Best take 'em out, sir;" which they did, and we got on all day with the four, but only for one stage further, i. e., to Mooi river, where we stayed last night. One of our horses, which had showed already symptoms of lameness, was too bad to-day to put his foot to the ground; so, to our great loss and inconvenience, we have had to leave it there, to graze for awhile

before being sent back to Pieter Maritzburg.

The Dutch have rightly named this river "Mooi," or "Beautiful." As the sun burst through the clouds and lighted up the little rocky islets which were dotted about, foam rimmed, every here and there, I could not but think that, deep down under an imperturbable surface, those worthy people must have a poetic vein, needing only a magic touch to bring it uppermost in spite of themselves. Many other of the names chosen by them have touching significance. Think of "Weenan," or "Weeping," for instance. How pithily does the very name tell the story of the tragedy which broke so many hearts and cost so many lives there. "Scores slaughtered as they slept," women falling as they fought by their despairing husbands, hoping to save their little ones who were snatched from their arms to be dashed to death against the wagon-wheels which formed their only rampart. As we near Weenan county presently, I shall fancy the very air laden with the bitter cries of these

poor souls who were in such pitiful case there some forty years ago.

A Mr. Macpherson, who with his wife and child were stopping the night at Mooi River, most kindly offered to leave his pair of horses at Colenso, that we might have their help as far as his place, which is beyond Harrismith. Another gentleman, Mr. Mansell, one of the Inspectors of Police (a force mounted and armed), also offered his pair for a stage, after which, I fear, we must buy one more to replace the defaulter. Oxen die of disease in numbers, at this time of the year especially, for the grass is not nourishing enough for them; yet some advised us to sell our horses and get oxen. Others said, "No; do the best you can with those you have, and perhaps as they warm to their work they will improve." Our mishap of to-day has nothing to do with the horses. The men oiled our wheels and bound leathers round our springs, but these roads would break anything. We are gravely told we shall come back with hardly a piece of the original wagon or harness left. There are large boulders over

which we bound, gullies into which we dip—almost precipices which we seem to overhang. Whatever may come in the way we must go over it, or struggle through it somehow, therefore by the end of our journey we shall have many adventures to relate. The drivers appear good-humoured, come what may, and they understand their work. They certainly use whips; one long enough for a team, and another of one or two sizes smaller, seemingly with but little mercy, but it appears useless to expostulate, and indeed the horses would not go without. Even Mr. G—— keeps quiet, and says, "Better say nothing; we must leave it to them. Meanwhile let us be thankful that we do not understand Dutch," which is the language they generally use, although they speak English and Kafir as well. Our men have very musical voices. I am struck generally with the purity of accent of nearly all born in Natal. If anything marks it, perhaps it is that it has more of a continental than a colonial ring.

The landlord at the hotel at Mooi River is evidently a gentleman, and a clergyman's son

is working with him. Mr. G—— shared the latter's room last night, and noted that he seemed to have a copy of each of the best English poets on his shelves.

We are informed that the landlord of the hostelry at Colenzo is a retired officer, so we begin to think that our real roughing it will not commence yet awhile, for the original caste of one's host is sure to influence one's fare even in the wilds; and if hotel-keeping pays, why should it not be tried as a purse repairer as well as trade or gold-digging?

7th June. Estcourt, or Bushman's River.—We have been here three days, and in all probability we shall be here for three days longer. I dare not trust myself to express half the exasperation I feel at this long detention for such an inadequate cause. My temperament is quite too explosive for South Africa, I am convinced, and if I lived—no, I should die of it long before that—until I was eighty, I do not believe time would ever reconcile me to the dead-alive, leave-it-alone-and-it-will-all-come-right fashion in which

people set about, or wait for somebody else to set about, what could as well be done speedily if they would but begin it less sleepily. An express train shrieking through the cuttings and tunnels of these mountain passes—and it is to be hoped that one will do so some day shortly—would work miracles, galvanizing these dry bones—oh! dear Natalians, do forgive me!—into new life and vigour. How some sharp Yankee competitors would make your tradespeople "look alive," after a manner hitherto unknown to them! Competition of any kind would give the impetus wanting; and Natal, to say nothing of the Free State, and the Transvaal, could find room and work for *shoals* of blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and handicraftsmen generally, if only they would come here.

Directly we reached our quarters on the afternoon of the 4th a judge and jury empannelled themselves and sat upon (some of them literally) our unfortunate wagon—making candid remarks which amused themselves, but hurt us cruelly. They looked wise as owls as they shook its body, rattled

its wheels, weighed its pole; but had not competent judges done the same in Maritzburg, and pronounced it fit for service? One half of the "things" they said might have been true, but I am sure the other half were not. It might be that it had been one of "Welch's old 'Bus'es," but as Welch wanted one of larger size what more natural than that he should sell the smaller and only half-worn one at half price? Possibly he might have taken less for it, but the agent assured us that he had purchased it at as low a figure as we could possibly get a vehicle of any kind for. Many of its defects had been covered over with the bright green paint which made it look almost as good as new. Its fresh tilt and clean lining might have a touch of hypocrisy about them, but I for one was thankful that it had at all events put a good face upon it. The pole was too heavy. Of that there could be no doubt, so it was necessary to have that serious defect remedied before starting, to avoid taxing our horses unnecessarily again.

Now you know the history of our delay,

just for a readjustment of the pole, and a raising of the body to lighten the strain upon the wheelers.

"What is your hurry?" we are asked. "Take it easily," we are admonished. "I dare say you will get off the day after to-morrow," &c., &c.

The blacksmith is a German. Probably in his own country he would be a smart workman. Here he takes his time like everybody else. I haunt that man, hoping that he will hasten, if only to get rid of me, to "lay me" as an unquiet spirit. Once I tried cajolery, praising his nation (with truth, for I admire it for its solid greatness), and telling him of a dear German sister-in-law I have in his Fatherland. He *stopped* to listen, so I nipped in the bud my flow of eloquence, and bid him "good day" with a sudden abruptness, which I am afraid caused another pause, to consider the reason of it.

1 p.m.—The post-cart has just come in with its jaded and battered-looking passengers, who were almost shot out at the door. They all have some pet bruise to chafe, or some

angle of their persons to guard from chance contact. The cook, at the sound of the driver's horn, rushes frantically at the saucepans, tears off their lids, and dishes up their steaming contents. Chairs are dragged hurriedly up to the table, our morning's calm is broken by the clatter of crockery, the rattle of knives and forks, and a racket of tongues, as the news is hastily exchanged in gasps between the mouthfuls the poor things hastily swallow with quite a hunted air.

"There is no peace for the wicked," I heard one say, one, too, whose features gave promise of a power of patient waiting which I would have bought of him at any price just then. He had heard the horn as the post-cart drew up to the door, and knowing he should not have time to finish his bit of rather stodgy plum-duff, when, as every one knows it is only eatable, *hot*, he quietly pocketed it for a future occasion.

Our landlord apologized for some little mischance, by telling me that his wife was away at the diamond-fields. She had been thrown out of the post-cart on her way up to them,

and had broken her leg or her arm, I am not sure which. (This same individual actually met with a similar accident on her return journey, and whichever limb she did not break going up she contrived to break coming down. This I have been told as a fact since, and I was sorry to hear it). "However slow-going everything else may be in South Africa, the post-cart is the one exception," I remark, as a few moments after it has left the hotel it appears on the opposite side of the river it has dashed through, and tears up the hill on its road to its next stage, Colenzo. Its advent and its exodus has done me a world of good. It has been as reviving as a sniff of pungent smelling-salts, or a breeze on a stagnant sultry day. Apropos of that, let me tell you that although this is winter, it is sultry by day, and the sun positively scorches one. No sign of rain, nor are we likely to have any for weeks to come, for this is the dry season. If we return in the summer, we may have drenching nights to tell of, instead of the cold and almost frosty ones predicted for us now. It has

been very pleasant to find staying at this hotel a gentleman whose acquaintance my husband had made in England, and who is, I think, a Fellow of the Royal Colonial Institute. Mr. Paterson is the magistrate of the district, and until he can find permanent quarters, resides here with his wife and children. I had brought out a little packet of seeds for Mrs. Paterson from a mutual friend, but had no idea that I might have the pleasure of meeting her. Thanks to her thoughtfulness we have had all our garments washed thoroughly and well in the stream, by her Kafir, who will, she tells me, dance upon them by way of mangling them. Having never seen a live mangle before, I shall not miss this opportunity.

Estcourt is quite an important place. It has three or four hotels, and that, here as elsewhere, is a fair test of progress. The clergyman, Mr. Smith, has been most kind and attentive to us, and with him Mr. G—— and my husband have had many pleasant walks. A—— is much interested in progress, be it where it may; and if only his

purse were as big as his heart, there is no doubt but the fine site chosen for the coming church at Estcourt would not long be in need of funds. The Bushmen Caves, from which the rivers (there is a Little Bushman's river as well as Bushman's river proper, probably a branch of the larger stream), take their names, have interested them much, and they long to be able to explore more of them, both here and elsewhere. The quaint devices, as records of the chequered past of these little people, are, we are told, well worth days of research. I shall get John in talking vein one day, when my gentlemen are climbing some hill to ease the horses, and ask him about these and many other things. I hope he won't fib, or invent, for I intend to believe every word he says, and hand it on to you unadorned.

Our Sunday services were very fairly attended in the temporary church, and Mr. Smith seems a hearty and eager worker amongst his people. Coal and blanket clubs are unknown because unneeded, and I doubt if a district visitor might not find herself all astray hereabouts; but there are many other

paths open to those who would help South Africa. Money to pay more pastors, money to build more churches, and plenty of it. Send heart-healing, wound-binding gospel truth, but keep all schism at home. Send "*glad* tidings" which make the feet of the bearers thereof "beautiful upon the mountains."

10*th*.—The wagon actually ready for our start at last! This seemed too good to be true, and my friends had quite the air of breaking it to me gently, lest the exhilaration of such hopeful news might act injuriously. We reached Colenso with only one mishap, a measure rarely small. Our wheel caught fire, and as it needs to be constantly fed with oil, and yet retains so little of what is given it, this is a catastrophe likely to recur frequently. We found Capt. Dickinson's hotel very comfortable, table well served, and our bedrooms far cleaner and nicer than ordinary. We breakfasted early on the morning of the 11th, and about mid-day took our first outdoor meal by the Drift beyond Blue Krantz. We reached the foot of the Drachensberg, which at this

point separates Natal from the Free State, after nightfall, very tired, very cold, and very stiff about the joints. Our horses had continued their acrobatic performances at every start, and our starts were many, for they constantly plunged us into "hobbles," from which they refused to pull us out. These had occurred continually until we reached Colenso, but from thence Mr. Macpherson's horses led off gallantly, and by keeping the rest in order, saved us from many a mishap. We have crossed at least twenty-two spruits, wet and dry. Under the head of spruit, understand the bed of a river or its tributary, a mountain course, or almost any track made by water forcing its way across the road. Sometimes the descent into these spruits is after a very break-neck, tumble-down-stairs fashion, huge blocks of stone, great holes, mud-pits, and such like having to be encountered, before you plunge into the central hole, from which you get out sometimes, and sometimes you *don't*, until you are almost dug out, with your teeth set on edge by the rasping of the wheel-tires against the

stones; with your ears deafened by the shouts of your men, "hup! hup! ah, now! ah, now!" and the cracking of the whip with the sound as of a gun fired off close by, while your eyes "see stars," as eyes will when the head which owns them seems only held by a thread as it were in its usual place, for it has been treated like a football the while. The poor animals move one to pity, in spite of their misbehaviour at other times. As we drew up at the "hostelry," cramped, cold, and tired, we counted upon rest and food speedily. This was what greeted us. The door opened at once into a large, mud-floored room, with open rafters to the ceiling, from which all manner of things were suspended, settles around the room, and a long table in the middle. A youth—Dutch really—but to all outward appearance a Yankee lad, or would-be-man, of the worst type, lounged upon the settle, with a pipe in his mouth, spitting *ad libitum*, and with a skill worthy of his Yankee prototype. He never rose, until pressed to go and see if we could be accommodated, and then he lazily

roused himself. "Yes," he ascertained, "the missus could have that room," pointing with a thumb to a door on the right; and "he," meaning Mr. G——, that to the left. He'd "see if we could have tea." At last a maid, who might have been own sister to the "maiden all forlorn" in the story of the "House that Jack built," brought us some lukewarm, undrawn tea, bad butter, bad eggs, and some bread. This unsavoury meal cost us 2*s.* 6*d.* a head. Our bedroom was indescribably dirty. The mud floors we had had hitherto had been decently covered, our window-panes clear and bright, woodwork polished, and bedding clean. Here, cobwebs obscured the light—the windows can hardly have been opened for months; and as the three beds had probably frequently held double their number of occupants, the concentrated essence of stuffiness is beyond my power of description.

The Dragon's Mountain! It sounds like a fairy tale. I seem here to be "living out" one or two of those which memory brings back to me from my childhood's store, as we

wend our way up that grand old frontier of nature's piling.

There was a delay in obtaining the necessary oxen for the ascent of the Drachensberg, so we did not start until 11 p.m. of the 12th. A—— and I walked a good part of the way, but sheer weariness drove me at last into the wagon. We are now 175 miles from Durban. Our boys with the horses awaited us upon the top of the mountain. They and a band of Kafir road-makers presented, as we approached them, a grotesque appearance from atmospheric causes. The Kafirs standing to gaze at us, leaning on their picks, looked gigantic; and, being immovable from curiosity, seemed more like huge firs or poplars than human beings. Once over the Drachensberg we were in the Free State; out of a dense mist, into a steady rain. Oh! the misery of it, boxed up in a little curtained wagon, with no space for one's legs. . . . . We are struck with the better roads here, and the flatter surface we have to pass over, the stones being taken out where not wanted, and put where they are, or piled ready for removal.

Harrismith, 12*th*.—We reached this at 7.30 p.m. last evening, lighted by a bright moon, soon after paying our first "toll," a mile from the town. This is a local arrangement, and makes of a bad bit of ground, a track fairly good. The Kafir in charge could not tell "right off" what we had to pay. This, John explained to us, was the cause of the excited talk between them. "He can't count, sir; he says, instead of 3*d*. a horse, and 1*s*. the wagon,—1*s*. for the first four horses, 6*d*. for the two last, 3*d*. for the one Jim is riding, and 1*s*. the wagon;" the amount being only discovered at a cost of much questioning and delay.

13*th*.—This hotel is really very comfortable for South Africa, or for any other colony I might add. There is the general room, with its long table and chairs, and a place for a good roaring wood fire, of which we shall be glad if this cold continues, as it threatens to do. There is a smaller sitting-room actually boarded and carpeted. Think of that! and curtains! and a sofa! The landlady is a homely Gloucestershire woman, giving herself

no airs, and being all the nicer for it. Her husband was away, she told us on arrival, but was expected soon; she meanwhile being an able manager of the business during his absence. Our bedroom has the usual mud floor, but it is sufficiently covered with cocoa-nut matting, the bedding fresh, and the sheets white. We must make the most of these and other comforts, for after Harrismith, we cannot expect even a roof over our heads for some time to come.

Quite the biggest man in the establishment is the Coolie cook and waiter. On Sunday he appeared resplendent in an ample waistcoat of rich plum-coloured velvet, with a chain and appendage which would have made any one of our home "Jeames's" die of envy. He had new trousers of a shade suited to the waistcoat, and chosen with a view to enhance its beauties; but he wore no coat, as it might have partly concealed the garment of which he was so justly proud. Running about the house and garden, in the enjoyment of perfect freedom, was a little,

Coolie girl with finely-cut features, and small, graceful frame, clad in a brightly-hued print dress, with the white muslin scarf of the Coolie race. Our landlady explained that she was by-and-by to be her cook's wife; she was already his property, and he had to provide for her as if she were his child, as to all appearances she might well have been. This is no unusual arrangement, and as far as the girl is concerned, if her owner acts the husband's part as kindly as he now does the father's, she will have no cause for complaint.

Harrismith is quite an important little town, with substantially-built houses—some two or three of them might almost be called handsome—and there is a good Dutch church. The streets are laid out well. They are of a good width, and drained after the usual simple Dutch fashion, by a dyke on either side to let the water escape. The shops are good, and contain a *multum in parvo*. I should empty my ink-bottle did I attempt to write the list. Anything from

iron-roofing to the gaudiest of head-gear. The site of an English church is chosen, and its foundations laid. All success to it. The young clergyman, Mr. Clarke, strains every nerve to complete the work he has begun. I cannot speak too warmly or thankfully of his many attentions to us personally throughout our stay in his district, and until we parted from him, an hour or two's trek out of it, upon our way to the Transvaal. Our travelling companion at every stopping-place has naturally sought out a brother of the cloth, and possibly we have thus indirectly owed to his introduction the attentions which have invariably followed. The temporary building in which the service was held was somewhat barn-like in appearance, but Mr. Clarke had made the best of the means at his disposal. The floor was of mud; but before the benches Kafir mats, bits of carpet, or coloured rugs were spread to kneel upon, the chancel being marked out by a border of green baize, cut in Vandykes. We had peeps here and there at the sky through the roof, which was of iron and unboarded; but no

one minds gaps and air-holes in this country. Our congregation numbered nearly forty, ten staying for the sacrament.

Flat as Harrismith is, there faces our hotel a high mountain, one of the many table-like formations of the country. Height, size, and distance are very deceptive. There being a spare hour one day before dinner, I remarked casually, "I should like to stroll up that hill, I suppose I could do so in the time." This created much amusement. I was told that it would take me quite a day, and that I should probably lose myself, even if I had strength to undertake the climb at all. My husband and Mr. G—— started off once, and returned worn out and weary, after a hopeless search for some Bushman caves, of which they had heard, as containing curious inscriptions, carvings, and relics of these daring little people, whose hands, small as they were, seem to have been against every man, as every man's hand was against them. Irritating as gnat-bites, one can fancy their attacks, as they darted their poisoned arrows from their tiny hiding-places, often dealing death from

behind a stone barely large enough to conceal a good-sized frog, or out of a hole into which a hedgehog could barely creep! The South African native is so lithe and agile that, be he large or small, he has a power of compression which requires to be seen to be believed.

14*th June.*—This morning we were to have been off, and had packed up in readiness. No such good luck, however!

"The horses must be shod, sir," says John.

Off goes John to the blacksmith, who consents to set to work (leisurely) to shoe our four; the borrowed steeds, and the odd (very odd) one, not needing it. This is fortunate, as it is to cost 17*s.* 6*d.* a horse! to say nothing of the lengthened hotel bill the slowness of the process entails upon us. We purchase blankets to cover the poor animals as they stand tethered to the wagon at night, for the weather has become very cold, and sundry enamelled cups, plates, &c., besides groceries, &c. We order fodder for our animals. This has hitherto not been

easy to obtain, and now we have it, it is so bulky that it incommodes us sadly. My suggestion of strapping each sack on either side the door has not been accomplished without some labour, from the want of any good hold for the fastening cords, over which the sacks oozed ominously, leaving hardly any room for ourselves to creep in or out. The horses will eat us out of the difficulty incredibly soon! too soon for our pockets. No wonder the patient ox is preferred for Veldt travelling. The roadside provides all the food it gets, and if, as at this season is often the case, grass is scarce, the poor beast trudges patiently on, living upon itself as it were, *i.e.* upon any fat it may already have accumulated. When that stock is exhausted, so is the ox; but its vitality is great, and there is more danger of losing your span by disease or by lightning than by want of sustenance.

15*th.*—Alas! even nature is against us, or we might have been on trek to-day. Rain, blustercus wind, and, yes, actually snow. I shiver outwardly and inwardly, and we all

gladly cower around the large wood fire, which a Kafir replenishes at intervals. Whence he gets the wood I dare not ask. I am sure it is costly and difficult to procure. Old packing-cases, casks, and sundries, contribute largely. Meanwhile I have had an hour of journal writing, which has conveyed me, the inward me, thousands of miles over the sea, making it seem as if I were telling you, instead of only writing to you, this tale of our adventures.

16*th*.—Another cold, dull day. The mountain opposite, patched all over with snow, gives quite a Canadian aspect to the view from our window. So, dear old Canada, we think and speak of you this morning. . . . . Mr. Clarke has just come in, bringing with him, to call upon us, Sir M. B——, an English baronet, who has a large property and fine farm in the Orange Free State, and who, happening to be in Harrismith, from which he lives some two days' journey off, has been weather-bound like ourselves. He means to start to-morrow, for he has a very light trap and four horses, all eager to face homeward,

so they will pull gladly through drifts and spruits, which our obstinate beasts would be safe to balk at. He says we should be mad to venture until we have given the sun and wind a day or two longer to dry up the boggy places, which we cannot with our heavier vehicle avoid. Sir M——'s hearty, cheery manner, and kind greeting, acted like a restorative, and his thoughtful offer of help and hospitality should we need it, as we passed near his place, drove away the dismals, and replaced bare resignation with hope. He and Mr. Clarke mapped out our route clearly, Mr. Clarke promising to escort us safely over the first bad "drift" we must go through not far from Harrismith, and Sir M—— promising to secure for us the good offices of a certain Dutchman, Placide by name, not given to help strangers, but who would do so when thus requested. Should our horses again fail us, we might, thus introduced, count upon Placide's oxen to pull us through Satan Spruit (suggestive name), at the foot of his farm.

17*th.*—No hope of starting. The roads

are impassable to us, though a very light conveyance might venture over them. . . . . The post-cart has arrived from the diamond-fields, many hours behind time, passengers all weary and mud-bespattered. One poor lady has her arm in a sling from a severe sprain occasioned thus:—At a roadside stopping-place all but herself had dismounted to stretch their cramped limbs, whilst a change of mules was being effected. One alone had been harnessed, when the remaining five darted off from the Kafir grooms, and tore helter-skelter up the broken side of a precipice to the right of the road. The deserted mule, seeing no fun in being left out of the game, started off after them, post-cart, lady, and all. "It is all very fine to say you should have sat perfectly still," said she. "It was not in human nature to do so when I saw myself about to be dragged to what looked like certain death." Without wasting breath upon screams, or precious time upon fainting, as we women are usually supposed to do under circumstances when such childishness would be suicidal, she lowered herself

from the seat to the floor, and, seizing her opportunity, let herself down upon one of the boulders over which the mule had just dragged the cart. She thus escaped with *only* this bad sprain. Arnica could soothe that, but broken bones would have been harder to remedy.

18*th*.—Really off. Mr. Clarke did us good service with his "sjambok" (pronounced shambuck), a whip of such stinging potency that even our animals dashed over stones and through mud, splash, schwash, schluck, sccrrssh, when he "laid on" with it, as he literally rode *up at* them, every here and there, upon his dapper little horse, first touching up one and then another of the straining animals. We were very sorry to say good-bye to our new friend. May he have in store for him as happy a future as he most richly deserves!

Placide's Pass, or Satan's Spruit, was our next tough morsel. Fortunately Mr. Macpherson's horses, knowing they were nearing home, lead off in fine style, ours almost involuntarily following them, John's fine

instinct having guided him aright to the narrow criss-cross of a fording-place, on either side of which mishap certainly awaited us. Triumphantly landed on the other side of this spruit, we outspanned and eat a hearty midday meal. One more short trek, and then picture us, if you can, camped for our first night upon the Veldt.

Tent travelling in Minnesota was luxury to this, I thought, as we made our preparations for retiring. Let no grumbling of mine mislead. Our discomfort arose entirely from the smallness of our wagon. Time being an object, it had been thought by those who knew the country better than we, that horses meant speed. It was the old fable of the hare and tortoise over again. Could we have kept up "hare" speed, the advice would have been right; but the season and other causes were against us. Could we have had relays of horses, we could have got on faster, but that was not possible, and even a team of model strength and behaviour could not have done the work continuously. Perhaps in the summer, when grass could be

had for the nibbling, our manner of travelling might be more feasible. I do not think I shall readily forget this our first experience of out-of-door bed-making under difficulties, but then it is the first experience which generally leaves the deepest impression upon the mind. Firstly, we had to turn out everything that was not fairly under the proper level of the seats of the wagon, before we could get out the boards, fit them into their places, ready to receive the grass-stuffed cushions which were to form our mattress. Secondly, we had to take them in again, and stow them away with ourselves somehow and somewhere. Poor Mr. G——, who feels the cold dreadfully, had to use the half-tent attached to the end of the wagon, where, on a cork bed, he courted sleep, but I fancy never won the drowsy god. Now, a cork bed is about as easy as a gridiron. The powdered cork tightly packed in ribs takes the consistency of iron, and has quite as bone-aching an effect, I assure you.

On the 19th of June we started early, with the good steeds Mr. Macpherson had

so kindly lent us, not daring to think how we shall get along after we have returned them to their owner by-and-by. We reached our good friend's store at 11 p.m. No, we did not reach it, quite. About twenty yards from his door was a sluit, into which we dived, but out of which it took a yoke of borrowed oxen to pull us again, with snapt pole, bent axle, and broken harness. John, with his big packing-needle, was soon seated tailor-fashion, stitching away to repair the latter. Then, with help, he lashed the pole, and tinkered us up to starting-point by the time we had partaken of Mrs. Macpherson's lavish hospitality. Both she and her husband were real benefactors to us, as I am sure they would not fail to be to any traveller in the same need as we were. Mr. Macpherson and his brother offered to accompany us as far as Sir M. B——'s, where we hoped to be by nightfall. We had but four horses to the wagon now, and they, missing the leadership which had kept them in order for the last few days, began their performances at the very outset. Not a half-

mile from our starting-point, without any visible cause whatever, one wheeler commenced a bout of kicking, which, as if by the winding-up of machinery, set the others puppet-fashion in motion. The rearer reared, the biter behind him bit him for fear he should cease rearing, and take to kicking, I suppose, which might have incommoded him; the plunger plunged—till more than one was down—Jim, as usual, in amongst the struggling mass, escaping, as he has done again and again, as by a miracle, without injury, and John outside, with voice and whip, helping him to restore order.

Any one who may be tempted to get out to look on, or to help, during any of these scenes, needs to leap into his place with tact and agility at the critical moment, a moment which it requires some experience to detect, for away may race the whole four when seeming most unlikely to do so, leaving them in the road to pursue and scramble into the wagon as best they can at the next halt. The drift, or river, was to be

our "coming struggle." The animals dashed straight into it with an air which promised much, arrived within a yard or two of the steep bank on the other side, and then could not, or would not, budge. I scrambled over the driver's seat, and managed to reach by a flying leap, the dry land, preferring the risk of a wetting to the far from cheering prospect of sitting in our devoted trap, whilst all hands were engaged in getting it out of the mess.

Mr. Macpherson unharnessed his helpful steeds from his trap, and, restoring them to their old places as leaders, they all pulled us through, after some delay, much whipping, and several failures. A hill full of boulders, with a very imperceptible road-line, lay just in front. "After that all will be fairly easy," said our cheery friend, "but I've a notion that it will prove a tough bit for your beasts!" Tough! ay, that it was; so tough that they would have none of it. They jibbed at once, and refused to make any effort whatever. They were fearfully thrashed, I am sorry to say, but with no more effect than

to make them leap from side to side, or only to recoil about an inch from their standing-place.

Mr. Macpherson at last said, "One of you come on with me to Sir M. B——'s, and see if we can get him to lend you oxen. It must be midnight before they reach you, so outspan and await what help may come."

I declined leaving my husband, so Mr. G—— drove on to Leon Kopje, to tell the tale of this our last disaster, we crawling into the wagon, the wheels of which were "klipped," to keep us from running down the hill, trying to nap at intervals, and to get warm if we could. About 10 p.m. voices roused John and Jim, then ourselves, English voices offering help, and asking what was amiss. A Kafir had carried back the news to Mrs. Macpherson, and two young Englishmen, assistants at the store, had kindly ridden off to help us. They put their horses with ours, and after two hours of urgings, encouragings, and alas, of scourgings also, bit by bit, the cruel hill was conquered,

and our wagon was safely landed on the plateau above. There, after parting with our rescuers, and thanking them heartily, we agreed to pass the night.

CHAPTER V.

More good Samaritans — Leon Kopje — Oxen *versus* horses—Wounded buck—We cross the Vaal River—In the Transvaal at last—Our first Veldt fire—Zücker Busch—Change of scenery—Sleep under difficulties—Storm by Ferguson's — Rumours of gold there.

20*th*, *Sunday*.—The morning dawned upon us with still much to be accomplished before we could fairly lay claim to this as our day of rest. The men inspanned early, and as the road was good, we made a fairly long trek before stopping for breakfast. Whilst taking our meal, we spied to our great joy Mr. Macpherson's trap, with himself, his brother, and our own fellow-traveller ensconced therein. By their side rode Mr. Crayneau, Sir M——'s bailiff, factotum, right-hand, lieutenant,—but indeed it is difficult to

define what he is to his chief, and more difficult what he is not! To us, from that moment he held forth a helping hand, so willingly, that I can find no name good enough for him. Mr. Macpherson was on his way homeward, and, feeling so sure of meeting us, Mr. G—— had returned with him to comfort us with the assurance of a kind welcome from Sir M——, and with the offer of just the help we needed, i. e. a small span of trained "*salted*" (acclimatized and inoculated) oxen at a fair price, to take us on to the Transvaal. We had resigned ourselves at last to the inevitable, driven by hard experience to recognize the necessity for this purchase, for our horses had proved a dead failure.

I may as well note here the one serious drawback to travelling in South Africa, i. e. the effect of climate and disease upon animals. Natal oxen or horses cannot live in the Transvaal, and *vice versa*, although those of the Free State will, I believe, live in the Transvaal. Ours did at any rate, and lasted, with one exception, until we reached Natal the

following March, being in good enough condition to be purchased for an up-country journey, to be undertaken soon afterwards.

A hearty handshake, with many expressions of gratitude, and our adieux, were made to Mr. Macpherson, who promised to fetch from Sir M——'s our recreant steeds, when we shall have made the exchange we contemplate, assuring us he will do his best to find purchasers for them. Mr. Crayneau added his horse to our team, and, taking the reins, drove us by a short cut known to him, but unknown to John, to Leon Kopje, or Lion Mountain—so called from its having formerly been the haunt of the King of Beasts—now his haunt no more, civilization having driven him farther across the Veldt. Sir M—— most hospitably received us—had our wagon drawn up in front of a new house he was building, but which was not as yet sufficiently complete for his occupation. We were not the only wayfarers thus received under his roof—for already a retired military officer, on his way with his wife and little ones up the country, were

quartered in one part, whilst we had a room placed at our disposal in another; they, like ourselves, having come to grief by the way. Their needs could not be supplied so quickly as ours—for their wagon, being larger, it was more difficult to find the eighteen oxen they required than the smaller span of six for us. Mr. G—— was to have a shake-down at Sir M——'s own house.

"I'll do the best I can for you," said our host, as he laughingly helped to make our quarters as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Up went an iron bedstead—down went some skins upon the mud floor (planks are 1*l.* a piece—so guess why they rank hereabouts among the luxuries of life). "You must make shift with your own cushions and rugs by way of bedding, and I *can* let you have a candlestick!" this triumphantly! An inverted bucket made a seat, and our macintosh bath and folding basin served each its own comforting purpose. After our last night's shivering and cramp, how nice to have a roof over our heads—space to wash in—I had never numbered

that amongst my mercies before! and a bedstead to lie upon, to say nothing of a comfortable meal, without needing to give a thought to its preparation, or of the warm welcome which was its best sauce. Never was such a country for good Samaritans as this, say we—judging from our experience so far.

21*st*.—The top half of our door opens at daylight, and a black paw hands us in the morning coffee. "Tink-tink-tink-a-tink!" at our wagon outside. Sir M—— is himself tinkering away, lying on his back at full length under it, and at work like any son of the soil. As the hammer falls, if a hammer can fall upwards, its regular stroke and sonorous sound show it is at no play work. If my notes ever should find their way into print, I trust Sir M—— will forgive my telling this little episode, for how can I be a faithful historian if I leave untold the many deeds as well as words of kindness which will ever make our stay at Leon Kopje a pleasant memory to us both? Sir M—— burnt up his last bit of packing-case to give

us a cheering blaze at night, the fuel of the country the "drift" upon which we shall have to depend for some time to come being too damp and soddened by the late rains to be available for the purpose.

22*nd*.—Breakfast over, a couple of fowls retrieved for us by Sir M——'s big dog (such a magnificent fellow), half a sheep, some potatoes, one loaf and some flour—we felt we were victualled royally, for some days to come.

"Your traps are ready," said our host, "and I think the wagon is good for as far as Pretoria." Up came our six fine oxen, the wheelers splendid creatures. much larger than the others—as is usual. John learnt off their names rapidly, "Colbert, Potbert, Uppermann, literally Upper man, Vetfort, Romann, Vedermann." Not to know these would render driving almost impossible, for each ox answers to its own name and to the word of command, going to the right or left as told, its only other guidance being that of the long whip—never the rein. More good-byes and Godspeeds, and we were once

more "on trek," Sir M—— running after us with his last gift, and it is true charity which parts with what it wants itself, i. e. an old yoke's skey (I really do not know how to spell it), with which to make our next fire. But for this happier after-thought we should certainly be without fuel, and could not "cook our kettle." I watched the steady pad pad of our oxen, and their intelligent comprehension of their driver's orders with considerable interest, and with a sense of thankfulness that come what may in the shape of road obstacles, these strong, clever big things would go steadily at their work, and "slow and sure" might be relied upon as our motto henceforth. No frantic rushes —no dead stoppings—no plungings—no rearings, &c., but progress steady if not rapid. Even Potbert's stumpy little tail, or what was left of that useful member after inoculation, had its interest for me. He was eloquent with that little stump, replying by a twirl first on one side, then on the other, when John addressed him specially, urging him to greater efforts, or to take up an equal

share with Colbert of that heavy disselboom which was thenceforth to be their joint burden. Jim had now to act as forelooper, to lead by a reim thrown over their horns, the right or left fore ox, as directed by the driver. The forelooper's is at times a difficult task, having to pick his way safely over gullies and holes, and through rivers, &c., but on a plain, flat road the intelligent animals need only the word of the driver, and usually go forward "straight as a die," never diverging unless a rare spirit of mischief possesses a leader, when of course all follow, until the forelooper swift as lightning seizes the guiding reim, and they fall into line once more. Nothing eventful marked this day. We found it cold at night, and our companion's very teeth chattered behind the respirator he wore as a precautionary measure, at the thought of his "lodging upon the cold, cold ground." We retired happy family fashion, Mr. G—— in his tent, the men underneath, and faithful little Flora, Mr. G——'s dog, with us in the wagon; she positively refusing to accept the nook her

master tried to entice her to occupy for their mutual comfort by his side.

23*rd June.*—Up betimes. One adventure only to relate. "Look at that cloud of birds," exclaimed one of us. "They're vultures," explained John; "there's a wounded buck for sure; if he was dead, they'd have pitched upon his carcase, instead of hovering about Jim as they are doing." Throwing the whip upon the grass, ordering a halt, and bidding Jim mind the oxen, John, seizing his huge clasp knife, bounded to the ground, and like an arrow from a bow, was off to the spot where the helpless creature lay with broken leg and gaping wound, unable to fly from the fate which instinct taught was in store for him. John and the vultures were of the same mind, with this difference—the man would kill by a blow at the cost of one pang only, whilst the birds were biding their time till exhaustion should paralyze their victim's powers. They would then devour him piecemeal, first picking out his eyes, to make him more easily their prey. John reached us, dragging the dead buck with him; it being too

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heavy even for him, strong as he is, to carry outright single-handed. The creature was lashed to the side of the wagon, until time permitted for skinning it, &c. The men ate voraciously of the buck; but we infinitely preferred our mutton, of which we could now have a larger share. It was very cold this night, although the sun had scorched us by day, as we camped by the Vaal River at last. The Vaal is really an affluent of the Orange River, and is the boundary pass between the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

Mr. G—— caused us and himself too some fun by an ingenious contrivance for keeping out the cold, viz., that of literally lacing himself mummy-fashion into his cork bed rolled up in his rugs, there being eyelet-holes in the large oil-cloth flaps with which it is provided. We did not see the effect; but it was easy to picture it, as we heard him distinctly panting with the unwonted exertion of donning full-length stays! Our rallying was taken all in good part, our friend sturdily refusing to be laughed out of

his novel method of "making the best of things."

24*th June.*—Watched the passage through the river of some heavy wagons, whose pooi, tired-out oxen seemed unequal to their task. The river was not deep, but the sand on our side made the bank very difficult to climb. Our men readily lent a hand, knowing the drivers well. They would have done the same in any case. The sand was literally dug away from the wheels; and at last, by means of a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together, amidst a Babel of sounds each span dragged up its burden. We went through the "drift" (synonym for ford) without a hitch, and on the other side congratulated ourselves that we were in the Transvaal at last, although many a weary mile from our actual destination. At our one o'clock outspan we cooked our mutton, and I concocted what I must freely confess was a stodgy "something:" component parts flour and water, for want of other material, and meant to take the place of bread, of which we had none left. This evening we saw

our first Veldt-fire—a grand and imposing spectacle, which we watched admiringly as we sat in the wagon awaiting our moonlight start. We shall see many more, John tells us, as this is one of the grass-burning seasons, so I shall postpone a description until we meet with a very large one indeed. This grass burning at given times is planned for the providing of food for animals on trek. About midnight we camped by "Sugar Busch Farm," owned by some three or four brothers, all dwarfs. "They calls them the piggies, missus;" by which I gathered John was making a shot at the word pigmies. It was a treat when we peeped through the wagon curtains in the morning of the 25th June, to see the change on nature's face. Moonlight had shown us enough to give promise of something different to the long track trailing its weary length along snake-fashion, amidst the long grass of the Veldt, or circling around hill after hill stony and bleak, of all of which we had so wearied. Now we had trees, chiefly the sugar-bush, and possessing no special beauty; but still

trees. Small kopjes started up here and there, as if the Veldt had upheaved occasional rocks and stones to relieve some internal spasm, but with some sense of order and beauty too. Nature had as usual lent a finishing touch, by filling up the crevices and gorges with mingled vegetation, creeping and berried. The little people had bountifully planted about their own house orange and other fruit-trees, and doubtless—for we were hardly near enough for me to be quite accurate—the blue gum too, which is of such speedy growth in this fine climate, that a home even in the desert may soon be made to possess a garden of beauty.

Having to wend our devious way, all the better for being devious, through scenery more varied than had fallen to our lot for so long a time before, made even the usual joltings and jarrings of the spruit crossings we could not avoid easier to bear—so Zucker-busch-spruit—Klipt—or stony spruit—and that of "Reit," or reeds barely elicited an "oh," and if we saw as many stars as usual

when the blood flew also as usual to our brains, we made no mention of them. Our fellow-sufferer's little stock quotation, always so apropos, won a smile from us now. "Rattle your bones over the stones!" again said he; and I repeat, as they rattled, we smiled! Our midday meal we partook of just before we entered Heidelberg, within full view of that nice little town, and close to the farm of "The Saucy Dutchman." Our men knew no other name for him, or if they did, preferred his descriptive one. "The Heidelberg folks bring their 'naughty' servants to him when they want them to have a good tanning," they told us. The worthy man being, from what I could gather, somewhat of a Judge Lynch in his way, though stopping short at what caused that worthy no hesitation. I will answer for the ferocity of his dogs. Could the yelping vicious-looking brutes of all sizes, ages, and kinds, have reached us, they would have torn us limb from limb. The gentlemen walked on into the town, while we cleared up; I doing lighter "chores" generally, the men the heavier part of the business.

"Are there many English in Heidelberg, John?" asked I, as we got through a bad spruit at its entrance.

"Yes, missus, a good many. Why if an Englishman just puts one brick top of another in a place, there he'll stop, sure enough. No use trying to turn him out."

There is much truth in this; but if the Englishman likes to stop where he has once planted the first brick of his home, he has no "dog in the manger" feeling about it. The Dutch have so strong an objection to sharing with the English, that it is they who move on, involuntary pioneers as it were.

Thus has much of South Africa been peopled by whites, in scattered homesteads, and upon huge grazing-farms of many thousands of acres.

As we are told, bit by bit, bygone tales of the Dutch occupancy of this continent, old-world pictures and patriarchal forms start up vividly before our mental eyes, and the go-ahead progress of our own generation seems the more unreal of the two.

One needs to be living this nomadic life,

and to be one of them as it were for the time being, to take it all in. Can it be possible that there *is* a country where the Edinburgh night mail is conveyed at a rate of some fifty miles an hour, or where the "Flying Dutchman" rivals its speed elsewhere? What rich humour the very name *here* seems to breathe!

John is especially tickled at the title, and seems to think it bristles with sarcastic meaning, he being "no scholar," and never having read a romance in his life. So many of my little "by the ways" I owe to John that I had better own at once how much is due to him. On first starting we received as gospel nearly all we were told of the ways and manners of the people amongst whom we had come. How to treat our "boys" was set forth, but against that I demurred.

"Those who have been long in a place ought to know better than new comers, but," argued I, somewhat obstinately, "human nature is pretty nearly the same, never mind the hue, all the world over, and I cannot think that we shall be the better served by pre-

serving this prescribed haughty exterior, cold distance, and unsociable reticence, or by taking as a right what, if accepted with some recognition of free will, may be given with less stint and the more heartily too." So commencing by easy stages, after my own old-fashioned "please" and "no, thank you" way, I got on to hearing a little of our "boys'" own up-bringing at the Cape; how Jim was John's foster-brother, how John's Dutch father, a gentleman's coachman in Cape Town, and his mother from St. Helena, treated Jim as one of their own, how John was saving up to become a transport-driver himself, hoping to possess his own wagon and oxen, &c. Ay, and months after on our homeward way, the romance having occurred in the interval, how he somewhat shyly showed "Missus" a photograph of a dusky maiden he hoped some day to marry. Well, and what of it? This: I believe that I owe to the good feeling thus established between us, much of what was surely heart-service on the part of these two coloured men, when my husband, a helpless invalid, and myself, depending wholly upon their sense of

kindness and honour, sadly retraced our steps from the Transvaal to Natal. They were true as steel to us then, sober and vigilant, showing at times almost a womanly sympathy for sufferings neither they nor I could do much to alleviate, although we all did what we could, our best.

Treat this long digression, an' it please you, as a kind of "outspan" on paper; so, now let us "inspan" and get on trek once more. My question as we neared Heidelberg, and John's reply to it were what started me off at a tangent. Heidelberg is altogether too nice a little town, and too important, to be rattled through without notice. It has its hotel and courthouse, its Dutch minister and church, its good stores and many substantially built, comfortable houses. New streets were being laid out, and there was an air of progress mingled with that of the usual repose which fails not to hover round any place in which the Dutch element preponderates. We replenished our stores there. Bread we could not get, only the Boer's meal, i. e., the flour of the country.

The moon would not rise until ten, so from tea-time until that hour we sat in the wagon, reading by lamp-light, chatting, dozing, &c., until the outer glare penetrated through our closed curtains, and warned us of the close proximity of another grass-fire; fire seemingly coming at a gallop, but though it was difficult to believe it, not directly us-ward. John had noted the direction of the wind, and had the track, bare of aught that could ignite, safely between us and danger. A careless driver ignoring this precaution runs great risks. A lady told me of a narrow escape she had once had. By almost a miracle the wagon in which she slept escaped catching alight. It had been drawn up side by side, she afterwards discovered, with two or three others containing large stores of gunpowder. In her case "ignorance was truly bliss," for had she known this during the time of actual peril her fears for herself and little ones must have been cruelly increased.

Travelled till 4 a.m. of the *25th June.* "Hardly worth while putting up the tent, is it?" said Mr. G——. I could not help

thinking it was, from our point of view, for if the space was infinitesimal for two, what would it be for three? However, it seemed selfish to say so, and exchanging a look of half-comical despair, my husband and I assented, or rather did not dissent, thus to make a night of it:—

I wedge myself in on the top of the bundles and packages of every kind, which nearly reach the tilt, and crosswise I curl myself up determined to utter again never a sound. The inverted wash-basin is my pillow. Mr. G.'s saddle, a purchase *en route*, by-the-bye, occupies just the hollow I should like to have and cannot, while the stirrups meet me turn which way I will. I pat lovingly a little softer bit I find, which if I could coax it into a better position would add hugely to my comfort. I give each of my limbs a turn upon it. It is not till morning I discover that I owed the few intermittent "forty winks" which visited my drowsy lids—to—the remains of Sir M.'s saddle of mutton! I kept the discovery a profound secret, lest my companions' appetites might suffer, and

although I did not altogether like the notion myself, I forgot it, on principle, at *meal* times, for it was Hobson's choice with us,—"that or none."

26*th*.—A steady day's work brings us to Fergusson's, where we have fortunately a thoroughly hearty tea—the mutton of course, which was really very tender! Mr. G. is anxious to reach Pretoria in time, if possible, to take at least one service to-morrow, he having been told that there is no clergyman of our church there at present. One good trek to-night might have accomplished this, but it was not to be our good fortune to carry out our programme. Rain fell in torrents, most unusual at this season, coming upon us with startling suddenness. The thunder rolled ominously, lightning flashed, and the wind shook us, rattled us, upheaved us, howled at us, did everything in fact short of carrying our wagon bodily up into the clouds like a balloon.

The men curled up like hedgehogs under the vehicle, sheltering themselves as best they could, and slumbering as profoundly as if

the elements were simply rocking them to sleep.

Sunday dawned, but with the pitiless drip, drip of down-coming waters, not as overnight with the sound as of bullets fired at us from afar, and with a power of penetration conveying more actual personal discomfort, oozing cleverly through the curtain in spots and streams, making tears on our faces and puddles in our laps. It was 2 p.m. before John thought it of any avail to start, rain having at last ceased. Breakfastless and dinnerless, for it was useless to attempt to light a fire. We could not eat raw mutton, and we had no bread. A little "Liebig" in cold water, and hard biscuits to munch had to suffice us until we reached Pretoria.

At Fergusson's my husband was told there were indications of gold, and indeed that some had been found in a creek close by. This poor man, we have heard since, has added another to the list of post-cart victims, he having been thrown out and either killed upon the spot, or dying shortly afterwards of the injuries he sustained.

CHAPTER VI.

Pretoria—Productive soil and fine climate of the Transvaal—A trip to the Wonder-baum, and a visit to a Boer homestead and orange grove.

Now, how shall I describe Pretoria to you? It was a bright starlight night when, our long weary trek over, we entered the city. Rest at last! thought we, and, oh bliss! a roof over our heads once more in prospect. John drew up at the corner of the large square which most of the principal buildings faced, and hesitated for a few moments, as if considering where best to deposit us. Touts from the three or four hotels gathered about him instantly, and, in Dutch and English, offered their hospitality. Haphazard fashion, one was selected, and it turned out to be one of the best, kept by an Englishman, though

with many of the peculiarities of the country to mark it. Mud floors, of course. In the corner of the sitting-room was a muslin-covered toilet-table and glass, for all comers. A wood fire crackled upon the hearth, which imparted an air of comfort to the somewhat nondescript apartment. Food, bath, and bed were good restoratives, and the morning found us revived and keenly alive to the interest we could not but feel in the capital of this independent little state.

Pretoria has its Dutch and its English churches, its Parliament House, or "Volks-raad," where most official business seems to be carried on; its bank, some very excellent stores, and many good private houses. I think every trade is represented and fairly thrives, but everything is dear. I gave one shilling and sixpence to have a pin put to my brooch, and was thankful that we did not require to replenish our wardrobes. Meat is cheap, about fourpence and sixpence per lb., but bread much dearer in proportion. Tiny little dykes run criss-cross about the streets. If one intercept your path, you leap it, or,

maybe, find a stone or a plank to help you over.

Pretoria only wants the magic touch of British capital and enterprise, in larger measure than it can under present circumstances enjoy, to become what I hope I may live to see it—a magnificent city, the life-giving centre of a noble state, peopled by thousands where it now has only its tens, its riches developed and its wealth reaped by the coming many, who, by the use of head and hands, will have earned a fair claim to the wage generous nature never fails to pay without stint. The Transvaal has a fine climate and productive soil. These reduce labour to a minimum; nature doing so much, man has contented himself to do but little. Think, then, of the return the doing of much instead of little would bring when just planting the seed and looking on, produce crops so bountiful. Manuring land in South Africa is hardly ever heard of. I never heard of it, I know, and I think I may safely assert that it would be considered a work of supererogation. If mother earth were treated now and then to

the life-restoring dose administered to her as a necessity nearly everywhere else, I can picture the large luscious oranges which weighed down the boughs of the fine trees in a delicious shady orange grove we visited, becoming as big as pumpkins and twice as juicy as now, and the monster lemons the size of cocoa-nuts! These are figures of speech, of course. My pen-Pegasus *will* get upon figures and comparisons, and then, I confess, the creature needs a tight rein. He has nearly bolted with me more than once since I have been "on trek." He is steady as old Time when upon facts, they being stubborn things, but when he can get a chance of a free gallop over open ground, where no one need be run down or scared away by his scamperings, he will have his fling if he can.

Pegasus well in hand, let me rather speak of the Pretoria we found than of the Pretoria as it will probably be ere even a few years have passed over it, and, as it is evident from the freely expressed opinions of many of its present inhabitants, they earnestly hope it will become. "Coming events cast their

shadows before them," and it requires no gift of prophecy to foresee that many difficulties are in store for that independent little Republic—little in numbers, not in size—if it persists in attempting to meet them single-handed. Clouds are gathering, the tempest lowers, and already big drops have fallen, heralding the coming storm. The scattered people of the Transvaal "number 8000 adult males, and out of these 5000 alone could by any possibilty be put into the field against Cetywayo's 40,000 warriors." Mistake after mistake has been made, it seems. Acting President Joubert, by his "ill-judged haughty messages to this chief, who craves nothing more eagerly than to wash the spears of the young men of his nation," did much, it is supposed, to stir up the muddy waters. Kind Heaven send that their colour may be red-tinted by the dark soil of the country only, and never by its heart's best blood!

The very thought of native warfare appals. Records of it in the past, read at one's own fireside, with every sense of personal security, have a power to make one shudder; but here,

where it is easy to see what great advantages nature and training give the savage, and now that, added to the assegai of the past, he has the white man's rifle and steady aim, who would not shudder at what may be in store for them, should the obstinate policy of the blind few prevail against the clearer vision and better wisdom of the many? The Transvaal can as little afford to blunder as they "who live in glass houses to throw stones." Tractable as the Kafir appears, and is, as he goes about his daily round of work in your service, singing the while, as if from very lightheartedness, nursing your baby child, man though he be, with a woman's tenderness and love, yet war transforms him; the wild beast of the desert can be no more cruel than he. He seems to cast his very manhood as a skin, and becomes a fiend incarnate. The white man's safety has depended in a great degree upon the inability of the native mind to grasp the meaning of combined action. Cut up into numberless tribes, and always with some quarrel on hand, the idea of making any great stand against the whites

has not entered their thick heads. They have a confused notion that we are not such god-like beings as they once thought us. They have spied out the joints in our armour; they have read official caution in our dealings with them for pusillanimity, and once let them tax us with that, our moral influence over them is at an end.

We are on heavy ground, Pegasus, my steed. It is not for us to decide the fate of nations, however it may vex our prophetic souls and sympathizing hearts to think of what yet may befall these kindly new friends of ours, if a wiser policy do not prevail. Neither you nor I, that we wot of, have as yet come under the shadow of a Transvaal magnate at all, and it is only from the little droppings from other lips that we have drawn our deductions. It may be that some with whom we have talked of these things were just a trifle faint-hearted. Let us hope so; for although, God willing, we may be thousands of miles away when the tempest bursts in its fury, if it be not mercifully averted, upon this plucky little community, it would

be grievous news to reach us in our safe haven in Old England that the despairing cry *had* been uttered in the far-away Transvaal, "Come over and help us!" when English ears *could* not hear, nor could English hands save! The solution of the riddle will never fall to our share; that much we know, so I will make an end alike of my hopes and my forebodings, and you, old dunderhead, must mend your pace and carry me and as many as can be induced to mount behind me away some hundred and fifty miles beyond Pretoria as fast as you can.

My note-book must again tell its own unvarnished tale, and this time, if possible, without digression.

Monday, 28th June.—Oh! the luxury of clean clothes, a breakfast already prepared and waiting for you, a civil landlord, new faces to study, and new ideas to exchange! Roughnesses tempered by civilization, and after the roughnesses we had so lately experienced appearing to us as no roughness at all. Everything delightfully new and quaint; everybody hearty and kindly in their greeting.

More English than Dutch voices reach our ears, and Kafir laugh and song, with their now familiar ring, meet us at all points, from the "tchaia! hamba!" (I cannot spell it) to the dog which is poking its nose into the cook's porridge pot, to the graver greeting of "Inkosi," or chief, as a Kafir meets one of his "betters" in the street. Then, luxury of luxuries, English letters! As we read them, Pretoria, its past, present, and future melts away from before our very eyes, and old England, with the dear ones it holds for us, rises up instead for the short luxurious hour we devote to the devouring of the messages loving hands have traced so many thousands of miles away.

How many really nice people there seem to be in Pretoria, resident or otherwise! I do not like to write their names in full, and if I multiply initials I shall puzzle you sorely. You will be investing Mr. Q—— with Mr. T——'s attributes, and making little Mr. Z—— do things only the very tall Mr. X—— could accomplish. Some of these nice "initials," including the two clergymen, for

instead of none there were two of the cloth in the place, made up a pleasant party to show us the "Wonder-baum," a tree of such surprising dimensions that no one could quite agree as to its exact size and height, though many hundreds of people have congregated under its branches, with their wagons and belongings, on the occasion of some public demonstration. The tree is a "Banyan," and has been destroyed in many parts most barbarously by some Dutch Boers, possessing no taste for the beauties of nature, but standing in immediate need of firewood.

The branches have arched out grandly; then, mother earth having seized them where they have laid themselves, like weary young giants, to rest upon her bosom, she has nourished them into new life just then and there, and lo! another arch has made another span, until you seem to have ready to your hand a natural church, with aisles, and chancel, vestry, and belfry complete.

After inspecting this real "wonder" tree, and, in spite of its church-like aspect, partaking hungrily of bread and butter biscuits, &c.,

under its shade, listening the while to the chattering noises issuing from the rocks and smaller trees behind, and hoping for a sight of some of the baboons which live amongst them, our party started for a visit, our first, to the house of a real Dutch Boer. This was a very favourable specimen, I was told, much cleaner and neater than is usual amongst them. It might have been cleaner, certainly, but then it might have been dirtier. We all filed in one after the other, I, humbly entreating to be amongst the hindermost, partly from modesty and partly in consequence of a bright little idea, over which I chuckled, that as we had to shake hands all round, from the father down to the baby, I might somehow come better off after the first shine had been removed by the five friendly shakepaws which would thus precede mine. I never appreciated gloves so much as then, especially as I neared the "tinies," for children up to six are liable to stickiness, and Dutch children, like their parents, are washed only once a week upon principle.

Introduced by Mr. Sharley, who, being the

clergyman, and one to whom our thanks are specially due for much kind attention during our stay in Pretoria, may surely have his name in full, we were cordially welcomed, and the hand-shaking over, according to the correct rules of etiquette, the father first, never the mother, which would be an error of breeding not readily forgiven, we were seated formally around the room or house-place. The Vrau never rose from her seat, to which she might have been beeswaxed, so firmly rooted to it did she seem, her feet on the usual pan of charcoal, and herself fast developing that necessary amount of fat which renders a Dutch wife beautiful in her husband's eyes. She was very affable, and talked, though I understood not a syllable, with considerable volubility. By her side on the table, in whose drawer she safely deposits and withdraws again never, if she can help it, any stray coin her husband dutifully hands to her, she being purse-keeper, was a Weir's hand sewing-machine, about some disarrangement of which she had some hope I might enlighten her. Could I have understood her

I might have done so, but silence was my best wisdom, and I expressed my inability by dumb show. A rattle of cups and saucers announced the coffee, which is served without fail as a mark that you are received as one of the family. I had rather dreaded this ceremonial, having been warned that I might not quite like its every detail. I certainly did not. A young girl, one of the daughters, superintended the repast. Between the filling of each cup, she dipped it into a small pudding-basin, holding more coffee-slops than water, by way of cleansing it. In her hand was a rag the size of a child's pocket-handkerchief, and the colour of the liquor itself, with which she smeared it. This might have been borne with some measure of equanimity, but to see her wipe her own face leisurely at intervals with the same, was just the one drop too much which made the cup, our metaphorical cup, overflow. This happened to the literal cup, by a sleight of hand, which probably procured me a character for awkwardness, but which spared me a nauseous draught.

Before leaving the farm we saw its fine grove of orange and lemon trees, and bore away bags full of the delicious fruit, besides eating as much as we liked. They were paid for indirectly, I believe, by one of the party who understood best how such delicate transactions are arranged amongst the Boers. Probably the coin itself was small which found its way into the house-mother's money-drawer, for rich and luscious as these oranges are, they have the additional virtue of cheapness too.

Our return cavalcade arranged itself in the same marching order as in the morning, with this difference, that the "grey," which had so strongly objected to convey me when outward-bound, testifying its objections thereto without scruple, pirouetting round at each little sluit, or ditch, with an eye to the stable in which he had idled for weeks, now stepped out freely, and even indulged me with a pleasant little canter or two after we had first mounted up, and then "slithered" down the stony kopje, which stood between the Wonder-baum and the capital.

CHAPTER VII.

The Dutch of the Transvaal—Some of their manners and customs—Courtship and marriage—Kill or cure—Religious customs—The Kirk-raad—The "Doeppers"—Nacht-maal.

I MUST find a niche somewhere amidst my jottings for my little "scrap-bag" of odds and ends about the Dutch of South Africa, and their old-world ways, which I gathered here and there, sometimes from one, sometimes from another; sometimes from answered queries of my own, sometimes from the "chit-chatteries" of the hotel table and general room; and notably from John, whose powers of observation are of no mean order. Why might not this chapter be my niche, as well as another?

To understand this quaint people, and how

it happens that they differ so much from the colonists of any other part of the world, it is necessary to take an imaginary kerchief, and with it to wipe away from the mind's tablets somewhat more than two centuries of time, and with them all the progress other countries and people have made therein. The Dutch of South Africa to-day probably differ very nearly as much, not quite, because of their national phlegm, from the Dutch of Holland, as they do from ourselves. Had an offshoot of our nation planted itself as a community, like these old Hollanders did years ago in some far-away land, inaccessible, partly because they chose it should be so, receding as others advanced, because they would not be meddled with, and content to do as their forefathers had done before them; should not we, I ask you, cut about as sorry a figure as they, when the outer world pounces upon us at last, and has its laugh at our antediluvian ways? Their very mode of living, that veritable living in tents, accounts for much of all this. When a wagon has formed your home for weeks, nay months, and even years

in some cases, would not even a one-roomed house seem spacious quarters? If you have not sat upon a chair for all this time, why need you be ashamed to squat? Habit becomes second nature, as we all know. Another habit of these good folks may even have its excuse. In their journeyings on and on, seemingly without aim, but really in search of "pastures new," water at times is a rare commodity, and has to be husbanded with care. The barrel slung under the wagon is liable to emptiness. A Dutch family wagon is usually packed full as any beehive, with human bipeds of all sizes and ages, and in every stage of unwashedness. Where buckets-full would not cleanse, what could a thimble-full do? Hence the faith put in the half-filled pudding-basin, and the tiny rag as a means of purification. The economy of it recommends itself to the Dutch mind, whilst to the Dutch body it is all-sufficient. Again, may we not find another excuse for this flaw in these our brothers? The old Dutch Bible supplies the sole literature they need. They take the simple words, each and all in their

barest and most literal sense, without the aid of commentator or note. Frequent mention they find of the old custom of washing the hands, face, and feet as a ceremonial more than for any other purpose, so, they argue possibly—at least, I fancy it would be like them to do so—that if that sufficed then, why wash more now?

"I wish you could have seen a Dutch wedding whilst you were in Pretoria," was once remarked to us. As we did not, I must tell what was told us of the manners and customs thereanent. "First catch your hare," applies as aptly to the preliminary step in matrimony, as it does to its ditto in cookery. But after what a dull, prosaic, dead-alive fashion does a young Boer maiden enter the toils! Dumbiedikes might have been a Dutch changeling, or Sir Walter Scott might have visited South Africa in his dreams, otherwise how could he have pictured such a suitor? Fancy its being possible for it to be a matter of uncertainty, amidst a bevy of sisters, until the very handkerchief is thrown to one of them, which is

the object of the swain's adoration! Yet such is the case usually, and it is harrowing to think of the pangs which might thus be caused to six or more maiden hearts, if each should have laid the flattering unction to her soul that she, and she alone, was the lode-star of love-sick "Pieter's" dreams. Not being a Mormon, "Pieter" (it saves an initial, and Pieter will serve our purpose as well as any other name) must choose one; and, in spite of taciturnity, who knows but that the cunning fellow has long made up his mind which sister he shall ask to become his Vrow? His caution and his pride alike deter him from making the venture at all, until he and his family have some assurance that she and her family are pretty safe to come to terms. Pieter is very young, but that is no obstacle to his success. Pieter is bashful; and if he were not, it is ordeal enough to render him so, when the actual moment has arrived for him to make his proposals in due form and in person; for I need not say that if getting a wife depended upon Pieter's writing a love-letter, he would

undoubtedly end his days a bachelor. Arrived at the house of his father-in-law-to-be if fortune favours him, he "off-saddles" by invitation, (you have no manners if you do so, be you who you may, uninvited,) and enters the "fore huis," or general room. He is "got up" regardless of expense, as far as his own clothes and his animal's accoutrements are concerned, and somewhat sheepishly he goes through the usual round of hand-shaking. Does he, or does he not contrive to convey by that dumb magic, which can make even a hand-clasp eloquent, the whole tale of his hopes to *the* maiden he desires to win presently? Deponent sayeth not, and the chances are that Pieter feels too many eyes are upon him, to risk even the little bit of comfort that tender finger-questioning might procure. Pity our poor Pieter, then, as he sits patiently until bedtime comes, often not uttering a syllable, and then only to reply to questions apart as the poles from the object of his visit. But, supper and prayers over, he knows it must be now or never with him. If he is invited to remain, he is sure of the

consent of the father and the *mother*, and here let me venture this little remark:—Women's rights have never been agitated for or against in South Africa, that I know of; but this is probably because women have so full a share permitted them. No Dutch husband dreams of deciding anything in matters of business, or which can in the remotest degree affect the welfare of his family, without consulting his wife; and he thus realizes the truth of another good old adage, "Two heads are better than one." Pieter asked to remain, then takes the first step permitted him. "He has managed to find out which of the doors leading out of the living-room (in a large Boer house there may be four or five,) leads to that which *she* occupies. There he stands, or sits, if he is wise, and there is anything to sit upon, until *she* passes in. "Now for it, Pieter, pluck up your courage; 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' neither will you, without a bolder front than you have been able to wear for these last few weary hours."

A whisper, and kind of a struggle which is

no struggle at all, and a "no" which is so like a "yes," that it will do just as well, and our Pieter has won the day; no, not the day, for it is night, and the question which he has asked, and which after all is equal to the question of questions, is whether she will "sit up and keep company with him!" If she has consented to do this, she has virtually consented to "sit up" with him as long as they both shall live. There is a primitive simplicity about this which robs it of all guile, and lest it should shock the sensitive nerves of any tenderly-nurtured, duly-chaperoned young lady in this our England, where "such things would not be tolerated," let me assure her that our young folks have less chance of whispering their sweet nothings unheard, than any nineteen out of twenty engaged couples here, where more outward fences bristle around to guard them from the faintest appearance of even a harmless indiscretion. Pieter is human, so, given the opportunity, he would probably like to kiss Gretchen, and Gretchen would probably like him to kiss her too;

why shouldn't she? But think of the giggles of the five disappointed sisters, from the "ha, ha!" in sardonic tones of the one who really for awhile did think Pieter had peeped out of the corners of his eyes at her, more frequently than he ought to have done, consistently with his not choosing her after all; to the downright not-to-be-choked-down, bubbling-over laugh of the youngest of all, to whom the whole thing is simply a good joke, out of which she at least will take her share of fun. The high, raftered roof is a rare conveyer of sound; therefore, oh! Pieter, and oh! Gretchen, muffle your kisses, or kiss not at all.

Pieter's trials are not ended yet, for here, as in more civilized lands, the bridegroom has the worst of it on his wedding day. Why should this be, I wonder?

Their wedding day has come, and there is much to be done before they subside into the private, humdrum, every-day life which lies before them, back in the old home—her home, for Pieter's wife takes him, not he her, to the old roof-tree, which might be made of india-rubber, so unlimited are its powers of expan-

sion. They will not start house-keeping for themselves; not they! Their flocks and their herds, the produce of the small number of young ewes, heifers, &c., branded with the special mark of each in their babyhood, are now joint property, and it is only when their riches increase with these that at last they may, as comparatively middle-aged folks, with olive branches many, move off into a homestead of their own. We will fancy the "Dorp," or town where the ceremony is to be performed by their Dutch minister, or Predikant, to be Pretoria. According to the distance they live from the capital have they taken from one to eight or ten nights on the road, their "royal" road to matrimony. Arrived in the Plaas, or square, in which their church is its most prominent, but by no means most beautiful, object, the wedding party outspan, sending their oxen to graze outside the town, tended by a Kafir herdsman, while they prepare for the great event which has brought them so far. The bride arrays herself as a bride is bound to do, veil, orange-blossoms, and all; but, beyond these,

I doubt if she makes any more purchases by way of trousseau. Pieter, poor soul! hires his wedding garments, and a pain and a weariness of the flesh are they to him. He is only thankful to know that as long as his Gretchen lives he need never, no, never, suffer such discomfort more. Should she die, which of course he hopes she will not, why then, you know—. A Dutch widower considers three or four months a long and tedious time of mourning. What better compliment can he pay the dear help-meet whom he has really loved and faithfully cherished after his stolid way for years than to replace her as soon as possible? Look at our Pieter, then; he would not know himself in the glass, did he possess one, and it is on the cards that he may not. An unmitigated "topper," stove-pipe, or whatever the real name of that unsightly head-covering, of which our civilized nations have never got the better, crowns him. His unaccustomed feet are stuffed into stiff, shiny-leather boots, instead of his dear old, easy-going "Veldt schoons" of home manufacture, his hands

into gloves, and the rest of his body is enveloped in a swallow-tail, black cloth coat, white waistcoat, and trousers of a size so accommodating that if they be hired by a lean man of ordinary height he must put up with their bagginess and take a reef in them somewhere to shorten them, so that a bigger than he may wear them too if so disposed. The ceremony over, Pieter and Gretchen have to exhibit themselves to an admiring world in their new characters as man and wife. Arm in arm they parade through the principal streets of the town, the husband taking the wife's arm, which may or may not be symbolic of the order of precedence which shall be their rule hereafter.

A few hours of further sacrifice to the Dutch Mrs. Grundy and our wedding party, again assuming the homely attire they will now doubly appreciate, inspan their oxen, and hie homewards, where, let us hope, they will end their days, story-book fashion, "happily ever afterwards."

To the uninitiated it might appear as if all Boer families were connected by ties of blood

from their custom of addressing one another in terms of relationship. The young folks call their seniors "Oom" and "Tanta," uncle and aunt, and the seniors, their juniors "cousin," the same name being applied to the latter amongst themselves. Any other title, such as we use, is never heard, except when an Englishman forgets their etiquette, and substitutes a Mr. or Mrs. for the more familiar appellation, and he must submit to being considered proud and reserved in consequence. It is a great drawback to getting on with the Dutch not to know their language. They are suspicious of some "*arrière pensée*" when words are used which they do not understand, and they dislike legal documents or business papers being in a tongue they do not know. Whether they have grounds for believing that they have been deceived I cannot tell. In a country where Dutch is so generally known and understood, it would be a small concession to make to meet them fully "half way" on a point so simple as this. Except Kafirs, there are none here who really rank as servants. A neigh-

bour with a smaller purse and fewer flocks and herds will accept an invitation to live near at hand, with the understanding that for certain privileges he shall render certain services. The capacity of these good folks for taking medicine is a proverb in South Africa. If one dose fails to cure, they take two, and then a third, and a fourth, &c. If these still fail, they mix up several together on the "kill or cure" system.

A storekeeper once told me of a trait of Boer character which, at first hearing, somewhat startled me, the more so as it was related of my own sex more especially. In our country, amongst the higher classes, where such a tendency has at rare intervals shown itself, it has been dubbed "kleptomania," and the remedy has been simply entering upon the bill the missing articles, which, like the sailor's kettle which fell in the sea, can hardly be called lost when one knows where they are. Now in South Africa the disease is dealt with as delicately as though it were just an epidemic kleptomania. It is expected, and therefore

it is provided against, and the tradesman protecting himself from loss by charging the article as a *bonâ fide* purchase—secure of payment without remonstrance or excuse. This is not considered in the light of a sin, but rather an amiable weakness, or a species of practical joke. Goods obtained at a store are usually paid for in kind; sheep, wool, skins, and produce generally, being received instead of money. This brings higher profit to the merchant than would hard cash, and saves trouble too, for the Boer head would be as sorely puzzled to count out the money as his fingers would tingle to relinquish it.

The Boers are a religious people, with views narrow, but clearly defined. Their children are simply taught God's own truths as in His revealed Word. They end, and I believe commence, each day by prayer, and their meals are untouched until a blessing has been reverently asked. Their church is the Dutch Reformed Church, and their love and respect for their minister is a marked feature of their characters. They submit with much humility to the recognized authority of their "Kirk

Raad," or Council, composed of men like themselves, only with a preference given to those who have won a position amongst them by their wealth, superior education, or more marked piety. Matters of business, quarrels, and the breach of any social law is laid before the Raad, and its decision accepted as final. The Doppers have seceded from the Reformed Church. I had fancied they were simply a lower class of Boer, not knowing that the difference was mainly a religious one. Their worship is conducted even more dismally than that of the section from which they have separated, singing being excluded as wicked. They adopt a style of dress which of itself is a blow to vanity, and the faintest approach to mirth, even in private life, is treated as a sin.

"Missus would like to see a 'Nacht-maal,'" said John, one day.

"What may that be?" ask I.

"It's when the Dutch come into town, once every three months, to go to church, and take the Sacrament, and get their babies christened, and the girls and boys

confirmed, and they buy their goods, and sell their wool, and they visit one another. Oh! there are lots of wagons outspanned in the square then, and the place is full, full!"

This Nacht-maal is a great institution, and has come of the necessity for occasional social intercourse amongst a people who, living so wide apart in their scattered homesteads, and upon farms so large that it is a day's journey to visit a neighbour, would otherwise never interchange an idea outside their own family, except when visited at long intervals by a travelling merchant who, like the Troubadour of old, is sure of a hearty welcome and of being fed upon the fat of the land, so glad are they to have him as a guest. Transactions of every kind are carried on during Nacht-maal, and as far as a Boer can be jolly he is jolly then, and so are his servants, and so are his young folks. Who knows but that it might have been at "Nacht-maal" that our Pieter first saw his Gretchen? and we know what came of that.

For undisguised inquisitiveness the Boer matches the American. Dutch fashion, he as

plainly asks you, "Who are you when you are to hum?" as any Yankee. Neither mean any offence; so it is better to volunteer as much information as possible, to save time and to enable one to get upon good terms the more speedily. Your style of travelling is of itself an introduction; the appearance of your wagon, the number and look of your animals, speak in your favour or otherwise. An Englishman who cannot converse in Dutch meets with no warm welcome as a rule, though there are many exceptions to it. Attempt a visit on foot, and no "tramp" could be treated with greater scorn and contempt.

My niche is nearly filled, but it has still a vacant crevice. What I have related of the Boers is of them generally as a class. Many clever, educated Dutchmen are to be met with in the Transvaal and the Free State, and I have heard speeches in the Natal Legislative Council from their lips, clever, pithy, and combined with a droll gravity which could not fail to add weight to their real words of wisdom.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Commando—We leave Pretoria—Among the thorns—Bechuana women—Pinaar's River.

PRETORIA was unusually empty at the time of our stay there. The Commando had cleared it of its men to a perceptible degree, and the Busch Veldt had attracted from it many families, much as Brighton or Ramsgate tempts the town-tired Londoner for change of air and scene. One or two pleasant evenings we spent at the house of a well-known leading merchant, who, in spite of his wife's absence from home, entertained quite a large party of us most hospitably. His house was well furnished and very comfortable, with so many of the refinements of life that it was difficult to believe how far up in the wild

Transvaal we were. New books and good photographs of many lands lay on the table, and the handsome furniture was so nicely arranged that the cleverly concealed mud floor never betrayed itself. Our host's kindness did not end with our first visit to Pretoria. It was he who was amongst the foremost of those who gave us active help and ready sympathy when, six months after, I, with my poor invalid, had again to stay awhile there on our weary trek homewards. Mr. Kisch (I hope he will forgive me for writing his name in full; I cannot let him off with an initial, he was so good to us) even offered us the use of his house then, and when, circumstances rendering it advisable for us not to change from our wagon and tent-life again until we reached Natal, we had to decline availing ourselves of his thoughtful proposal, soups and beef tea came to our little camp daily from his kitchen. Nor was Mr. Kisch alone in this. A lady to whom we were perfect strangers was equally helpful, and oh! what good Samaritans were Mr. Hall and his family! Mr. Hall and his son

had been our fellow-passengers in the "Zulu," and it was like a whiff of a home breeze to hear, all unexpectedly, the hearty tones of their voices in Pretoria when I had thought they were days of travel away in the unwholesome region of Delagoa Bay, giving their best energies, as they being what they are would be safe to do, to the construction of *the* railway, the success or failure of which shared the interest as a current topic with the prospect of Kafir fightings, and who next might be "commandeered" for active service.

"What would you do, if your wagon and oxen, your men, ay, and even your husband were 'requisitioned,' as they are liable to be at a moment's notice, for you have exceeded your limit of exemption, forty-eight hours in the Transvaal? You are all right yourself, you know, and so is your fellow-traveller, he being a clergyman!"

I naturally repudiated the idea of its being possible to be "all right" myself, should such an untoward circumstance occur, and stoutly averred that they would infallibly have to requisition me too, whether they wanted me

or not. I could load their guns and fire them off also, if hitting any special object was of no moment, and I might do odd jobs in Laarger and earn my salt in some way. Kind fate spared us all this, and thus we were more fortunate than had been a troupe of Christy minstrels who were just making a good thing of it, when their excellent performances sealed their doom. Had they done less well, their services might not have been coveted as a band to the little force raised in the place; but such was their fate, and every one but themselves enjoyed the joke hugely.

The English church of Pretoria is a nice little building, and the services are well conducted and fairly attended. The Transvaal is a wide new field, and one worthy of the occupying by earnest church workers and teachers, of whom now there are only too few, scattered sparsely over its wide area. But these, like many other good things, are in store for it, let us hope and expect.

Here I think I had best betake me to my journal again.

30*th June.*—The wagon was brought round to the door to be packed before starting for our last trek of eight or ten days if we are fortunate, many more if the reverse, to our destination in the district of Marabastadt. A larger one had been sent to meet us by the manager of the Gold Mining Company, with whom my husband would have business relations, rendering our stay upon their estate necessary for some time. This second vehicle will afford us all three the greatest possible relief, easing our rickety old trap of much it had groaned under before, and giving Mr. G—— the comfort of a movable home of his own, with a bed on the swinging cartel which will be ever ready to his hand, under the shelter of a firm roof, instead of the make-believe covering which was all the half-tent or flap has hitherto afforded him. The nights are very cold, in spite of the day's sunshine, and the frost, on awaking, shines like stars on the natural carpet around us; so guess if it be not pleasanter to lie upon a mattrass several feet above the ground, instead of on a cork bed

upon it. The men mind nothing, curling up like hedgehogs and sleeping anywhere, rolled in a blanket and great coat, with a huge comforter around their heads and throats. As for the oxen, tired beasts, they slumber as placidly after their hard day's labour in cold as in heat; as well in rain and wind as under the clear bright stars, which look twice as big as our little "twinklers" at home, or under that large motherly moon which smiles so searchingly yet so benignly upon our small camp, which I should like to sketch for you, so smiled upon, *if I could!* The Company's agent has thoughtfully laid in the stores for ourselves and "boys;" bread, meat, and a sackful of rusks, so I may be spared what had become a tri-daily nuisance, the separating from our own their flour, coffee, &c., at our feeding-times. I have made bags for everything, which at our stopping-places can be put down bodily upon our table, (?) each one helping himself, the last to do so being expected to tie up their mouths and replace them in their proper receptacles, the large canvas pockets around the wagon.

Many gathered around us to "speed the parting guests," and it was not without much regret that we saw the last of those who had helped to make our visit so agreeable. Mr. Sharley, the vicar, started with us, intending to stay with us for the night, and to walk back on the morrow if he did not succeed in borrowing a horse at some Dutch house on his road.

Pretoria looked well as we ascended the hill. It really lies high, but being upon a broad expanse of table-land it has the appearance of flatness, which suggests marshiness also, yet it could ill spare one drop of its water I opine, nor did we hear any complaint of its unhealthiness. At first it seemed that our road promised to be a counterpart of much that we had travelled over before, hill after hill, for the city is sentinelled as it were by them, over which we must climb, or round which we must skirt, until the crowning flat be reached, and passed, then again over boulders and into holes and watercourses to table-land again, and so on *ad libitum*. It is not to be so, however, for we shall soon be

amongst "the Thorns," or, groves of mimosa-trees bristling with thorns as with weapons, some of them of three or four inches in length. I have had given to me a specimen of a stout, twisted thorn-creeper, which the Dutch use in their houses as we do hat-pegs in our halls, and an uncommonly firm and good substitute it might be. This night's camping was my first experience of its being possible to almost enjoy—I speak advisedly, for I dare not say *quite*—wagon travelling in South Africa. To begin with, we were really clean, and to those who have never been otherwise it may seem a superfluous fact to mention, but one very easy to realize, all things considered. One hand-basin between three; a wagon tilt with restless curtains, which are as likely to fly up and give a full view of its internal economy with no notice at all, for each to retire to in turn, the baking sun making it cruel to keep any one outside for an unnecessary moment; a modicum of water, unless one would drive poor Jim perpetually to the stream; a piece of soap which always found its way into the last place it

ought to be—I bit it for a rusk in absent mood one day; or else the stream itself, than which the market square of any county town could hardly be more public, and have we not our excuse? Good folks, we liked it no better than you would, but I think you would have to put up with it as we did; and if, after all, you must swallow your traditional "peck of dust" before you die, it may be that here, like a nauseous draught, you are doomed to take yours wholesale instead of by instalments, in at your mouth, in at your nose, and in at the pores of your skin as well. We were clean to begin with, then, and as some measure of shade and shelter was in store for us, we hoped to continue fairly so to the end of the chapter. Another reason why our first night out from Pretoria seemed to promise better things was that our good friend Mr. Sharley performed miracles of handiness, fetching out the bread and the cold fowl, lending a hand with the fire, seating us round it in picturesque attitudes, one on a rug, another on a water-barrel, a third on the enamelled basin upside down, and himself on

a sack, ending by stowing everything away in good order again.

1*st July.*—Surely among the farms and homesteads which we saw scattered here and there yesterday, nestled in the hill-sides, never very near the road, but each with its track to connect it therewith, our "Vicar" will procure a steed, or at least bread and coffee to eke out the small modicum of cold chicken, which was all we could induce him to take from our stores. Let us hope so, and meanwhile let us attack some of those luscious oranges with which he stuffed every spare nook in the wagon he could discover after substantials had been duly placed. We are amongst Basutos or Bechuanas now, who can only partly understand Zulu, the difference of dialect being chiefly idiomatic. Mr. G—— has seemed to hold converse with them, and John could interpret their words to me, so I imagine there must be much similarity between the two tongues. The Zulus are the "big swells" amongst the Kafirs, and are deemed by white people to possess greater intelligence, and to be

altogether of higher calibre than other natives. I believe the Kafirs generally to be more naturally gifted than it is allowed that they are, and I am sure, like an Irishman in the witness-box, they are clever at adapting a stupid air of "don't understand you" when it suits them, they understanding you very well the while.

I am writing with my back against the wheel, trying to think that it affords me some shade, and that none of the oil from the insatiable axle-box is trickling down my neck. Chatter, chatter, chatter in shrill tones; women's voices in voluble Kafir. We have outspanned near their kraals and mealie grounds, and two or three of them with a man (young women are accompanied always by an attendant, sometimes an old woman of the tribe), have just stopped to gaze and to enter into converse with our men. Upright as a dart, these coloured sisters of mine poise gracefully on their heads, with no help from their hands, the clay-drinking vessels in which they have just fetched water from the spruit which trickles pleasantly within

earshot. Mr. G—— joins them, and shouts, nay, shrieks of delight reach me. They are peeping through his opera-glass, and their huts and gardens, and people and dogs seem to come nearer and nearer to them until they think it witchery. The glass removed, why! they are as far away from home as before they put it to their eyes! One more trial! yes! there they are again! If the Inkosi does not look about him sharply, the coveting of that glass may end in its disappearance, for its charms are irresistible, and what wonder? . . . They have found me out now, but what can I produce that could astonish and delight like Mr. G——'s magic glass? I have a wish that I could rival him with a large ship's telescope, and by bringing their lord and master, whom probably they share with some twelve or fourteen others at least, before them, make them run away with fright lest he should beat them for lingering on their errand. They clap their hands, and throw back their heads, and their lips emit a sound which I can only render thus, "sst-tss! oh! e-eeuch" as they point, not at me, but

seemingly over my head, at my poor old hair comb which after sundry shatterings has its ornamental parts lashed together by cotton as near the colour of tortoise-shell as I could find, but not near enough for the difference to be disguised. They probably imagine it is a large, ill-formed bone which has protruded from my brains during our joltings on trek, and they would like to know if more are coming by its side!

They are putting on coaxing airs now, and rubbing themselves as though they had an internal vacuum which they wish me to fill.

"John, what *do* they want?" I inquire, almost pettishly, for *I* want *them* to go, as my little wash of clothes and towels is over, all dry enough too for packing up again; and we ought to have been off half an hour ago!

"They want missus to give them something to eat!"

Now these women have plenty to eat of their own kind of food, and we might run short if we are not frugal, so for awhile my miser-like instincts prevail, and I will *not*

understand.' Finally I yield to their blandishments, and hand them a few rusks. They repay me with exclamations of extravagant delight, even saying distinctly,—

"Tankee, tankee, missus!" and by marching off, jabbering loudly, single file and erect as they came.

Old Carolus, the company's man who drives the larger wagon, takes the lead, as he knows the road, and to John it is now new and strange. Still, I would back John's instinct against the old fellow's experience any day; for already we can perceive that we slacken speed, outspan longer, and altogether take it more easily than our younger man likes. We had our evening meal by "Preller's Farm," near which, in the gloaming, we could see the scattered tents and camping-grounds of the Pretoria families, who come here, as I have before related, for their yearly change of air and scene; their husbands riding out from town from Saturday till Monday, to share the delights of a picnic in the Busch Veldt with them. The cattle are left here to graze and for comparative shelter, as this is

the winter; although by day, it is hard to believe it, and grass is more plentiful here than elsewhere.

Near Pretoria grows a noxious plant, called toolk (or toolp), which is fatal to oxen at a certain stage; and it was with some anxiety we watched lest ours should be tempted to their death, as so many have been before them, and will be again ere it can be exterminated. "John, what is Carolus shouting so for, and why are we stopping?" we ask, as so soon after our start, this time in the dusk, we seem to come to a standstill. John and Jim listen for a moment, and then burst out into roars of laughter. They understood every word of the torrents of execration the old man was pouring out upon the devoted head of his unfortunate young Kafir forelooper; ending them by leaping off his wagon in his rage, and brandishing his long ox-whip, which I trust never even grazed the offender's body. The boy did not understand forelooping well, and Carolus, not being so young or clear-sighted as he used to be, could not make up

for his deficiencies. The result promising to be a disastrous termination to our day's work, the word was passed on to outspan and wait till morning.

July 2nd.—Whilst breakfasting, I asked our man at what time we had started. His reply was a poem of itself: "Before the morning star was up, missus!" And so we had; but having the wagon to ourselves, there was no need to move from our recumbent position, nor to make even a pretence toilet before we could present ourselves. The sensation was just a trifle queer as we pitched head foremost—for our pillows were near the driver's seat—into holes, or down the steep banks of spruits, until our heels were where we should have preferred our heads to be. It was rather a nuisance to having to make frantic rushes to save the various articles which broke loose from their fastenings, which had seemed *so* secure when we were quiescent, but practice will make us perfect, and to-morrow I hope I may record, "*Nous avons changé tout cela!*" I have a leather strap fastened, so that I can slip my arm through

it as a support when a more break-neck piece than usual has to be encountered, at which John calls out warningly through the curtain, "Missus had better hold on!" thus saving me many a bruise.

Pinaar's River will be one of our outspans that I shall remember most vividly always, although it was not until I saw the impression it made upon my husband that I was so peculiarly struck with its beauties and their accessories. We had accomplished the ford easily, and from our bank could watch the passing over it also, stopping to drink midway, of herd after herd of cattle, oxen, sheep, goats, &c., driven by their attendant Kafirs, each with his gun to protect his charges from lions, jackals, and other wild beasts. There were children, Dutch and clothed, and Kafir and unclothed, or nearly so, and dogs innumerable. A Dutch camp was pitched just on the other side, the white tents glinting amongst the trees. The water sparkling and bubbling we could hear better than we could see, as the overhanging foliage upon its winding banks jealously hid it from distant gazers,

whilst adding to its charm on a nearer view. As we left our camping-place, other wagons had just crossed the river, taking our place upon the sward. My husband seemed as though he could not tear himself away, so fascinated was he by the scene. "H——," he said, when that far-away look had died out of his eyes, which had shown me how his thoughts had wandered, and whither, "we have been living out as it were a chapter of old Bible history to-day. It is almost too vivid! 'And they were dwellers in tents,'" he murmured, as this living *tableau* of patriarchal times was shut out from our view by the windings of the road which led us away from Pinaar's River.

CHAPTER IX.

The Warm-bads—Great storm—De Beere's—We astonish the Natives—Giraffe-skins—Reim and whip-making in South Africa—Primitive method of threshing and winnowing corn, &c.—Kafir endurance of bodily pain—Simplicity of his diet—How John cured a snake-bite—Midges and Mosquitoes—Tractability of the South African Trek-ox.

3*rd July*.—This day is memorable for the second great storm we have had since we left Natal, and a storm at this season is of very rare occurrence. We had made up our united minds to earn the rest we promised ourselves to-morrow, Sunday, by a trek of unusual length to-day. We passed the "warm-bads," or mineral springs, without stopping for more than a passing glimpse at the wagons encamped around them, belonging to those who sought to benefit by their health-restor-

ing properties, and which, by-and-by, when the Transvaal is more thickly peopled, will probably make the fortune of some enterprising capitalist, who, if he wills it, has a Baden Baden ready to his hand. We were in raptures over the lovely scenery, as we wended our way through park-like glades, shaded by fine mimosa-trees, far loftier and more outspread than any we had hitherto seen. We are nearing the Waterberg range, which, unlike the hills we have passed, are wooded from crown to base. The fancy seized me, as I gazed at them, that they were as the vanguard of an army which had thrown out scouts and outposts, through all of which we had passed unchallenged. The latter had been either in *mufti*, or so simply *uniformed*, that no one connected them with the mighty band of warriors behind them—that grand old range itself, clad in its war-paint, and bristling with its weapons. The fancy grew upon me as the black clouds, of whose threatening we had taken so little account, emptied their waters upon us with such overwhelming force, that it seemed as if we must

be flooded off the track before we could reach even the dangerous shelter of the fine tree, of which I will, if I can, contrive to send you a sketch. Oh, the roaring of that thunder, the flashing of that blinding lightning, the clatter of those bullet-like drops, which deafened us so that we could not hear one another speak as we huddled together under our canvas roof, and the howling and whistling of that wind!—wind which uttered screeches, and groans, blustering shouts, and, during a lull, weird-like whispers—wind which scolded us, and wind which soothed us—wind which threatened us, and wind which first deceived us by a regretful heaving, like the sobs of a naughty child begging to be forgiven, and then changing its soft utterances to demoniac laughter at our gullibility! The wind had not half done its worst, not it. It seized boughs and patches of dry or burnt black grass, and sent them off in mad dances in mid-air. It first checked, and then hustled forward and backward big birds, as they struggled to reach some refuge-haven, making them utter shrill cries for mercy! It made

the Kafir dogs, which shrunk by us, crawl with tail between their legs, as dogs do elsewhere when they dread your anger, and wish to deprecate it. The wind had its "high jinks," and played its pranks, until the deluge drowned all the nonsense out of it; but when that came we almost wished it back again. For nearly four hours the battle raged, "heaven's own artillery," opening fire upon us, making us realize, as surely no storm can do—which has not to be faced, where only nature's handiwork surrounds you—our utter insignificance, our helplessness, and our entire dependence upon Him in whom alone "we live, and move, and have our being."

During a short lull we arranged our couch by lantern-light, the rain continuing steadily nearly the whole night through, only moderating towards morning.

Sunday, the 4th.—Slight storms at intervals during the day; clouds and sunshine seemingly at a game of hide and seek, the sun making the clouds cast pall-like shadows in places, all round and about which it smiled gladly. One mountain tip would be all aglow,

while its *vis-à-vis* kopje, one of the nigh-at-hand sentinels, would be wrapped in gloom. The sturdy army had stood the attack bravely, and showed no signs of being worsted in the fight, or none that our eyes could see.

The long grass made it impossible for me to go for more than a few yards from the wagon, though I short-coated, gaitered, and macintoshed myself as completely as the gentlemen did when they made their two attempts to *wade*—I cannot say to walk—as far as the "Warm-bads" for a better view of them than our futile haste of yesterday permitted us. As they appeared in the distance, returning from their fruitless errand, they looked comically like two disappointed storks, picking their way over bog and morass, now hopping up, now sinking down, as the long grass hid from sight the inequalities of their path. Our little service over, during which we had heard our men's voices in confab with some visitor, we had to go through a hand-shaking match with a Dutch youth from a farm not far off, who came to visit our camp, and to tell us that they could not spare us either

bread or milk, upon both of which we had fondly counted. We had heard distant sounds of rejoicings, firing off of guns, &c., before getting off to sleep, when the storm of last night had slightly abated, and had wonderingly inquired their meaning of John.

"It's a wedding, I expect, missus; for I saw a minister go by yesterday, and the men with him were all dressed up as Dutch people only do when there's a marrying going on."

The guests, I suppose, had been hungry, and made a clean sweep of every edible; but "we will not go fasting, nevertheless," think I, as I contrive a hodge-podge of meat, vegetables, and rice, warmed in a good gravy from a tin of condensed soup, which, if it tastes as good as it smells now as it simmers in the pot, will go far to make us forget the discomforts of last night. I have a suspicion that the beef may prove a trifle tough; but is it to be wondered at that an old trek ox, which has served man faithfully during his weary lifetime, and borne his lash without remonstrance, should venture to *disagree* with him when death offers him this one chance of

mild retaliation without dread of further punishment? A few pudding raisins for dessert, and, this being a kind of gala day, our last bottle of sherry opened, that we might drink a loving toast to "absent friends," and we shall have dined royally presently.

5th July.—Reading, chatting, and even singing, after our short evening service, ended our yesterday; we all, by one consent, "turning in" early, with a view to shorten that day and to lengthen this by being up with the lark. We breakfasted by a farm at the foot of the first hill of the Waterberg range, to which we had seemed already so close during the storm, but from which we had been in reality two good hours' trek away. The grasses were remarkably fine just here, and in great variety. Fine trees, blue gum principally, planted only some four or five years ago, but over fifty feet high already, bounded the homestead on one side, and a beautiful orange-grove the other. Several wagons were outspanned amongst the trees, with women sitting sewing and children playing, as much as Dutch children

can play, around them. Altogether the spot seemed more inhabited and village-like than any but the actual towns through which we had passed. The dreary isolation which had chilled us as we had looked back upon the lonely homes to which these people of free will had banished themselves, and in which we had seemed to leave them more lonely still as we trekked slowly by, was not so striking here, and these good folks looked all the brighter and keener-witted in consequence.

"Better not buy anything there," suggested John, who has known every place, person, and thing upon the road hitherto, but now acts as echo only to old Carolus; "there's a farm in front much better kept, nearly as good as an 'Englishman's.'"

With this hint we defer our raid upon this orange-grove, counting upon a supply at the farm of the model Dutchman. Before we arrived at the abode of that worthy, a rather comical scene awaited us. Some five or six Kafir women, who were marching along erect and majestic, bearing their clay vessels upon their heads, suddenly spied our cavalcade,

and, after standing for one brief moment spell-bound, dashed down their burdens and ran like startled deer away, again standing, at safer distance, for one more look at the cause of their discomfiture. Mr. G——, thinking they had seen a snake, stopped the wagon and got out to do battle with the beast, valiantly as any knight of old for damsel bestead. No sooner did they see him than their fears reached their climax, and they scudded off with shrieks of terror. Our men were beside themselves with amusement. They laughed until they nearly fell off their seats, and their mirth was infectious, for we all laughed in concert, until reflection showed us a sadder side to this little adventure. "Why," asked we of one another, "should it be possible to these poor souls to conceive that any harm could come to them from white people, be they whom they may—Dutch, English, or Portuguese—if there were not some sense of injury unrequited, and which they fancy has still to be paid for upon the heads of their generation? or have they some knowledge of a coming struggle which may,

they fear, have commenced elsewhere and made us already their open foes, they as yet not knowing it? else why so ready to fly at the faintest approach of danger?". No satisfactory answer suggesting itself, we reached De Beeres with the riddle still unread.

The first object which caught our eyes was a huge banyan-tree, of great age and beauty. From its boughs were suspended a large number of giraffe-skins, looking gaunt and lanky, and, at first sight, as if they were the animals themselves. These were drying, previously to being cut into strips, which strips go through several processes before they emerge into reims and whips—whips of a power to lacerate and sting which it makes one shiver to think of, and rouses one's sympathy for the poor animals who, many of them, carry their scars to the grave. That word misfits my meaning. A South African ox rarely has a grave. Where he falls there he lies, till kind Death releases him, and then the birds of the air finish what the jackal leaves of him; or he works until he can work

no longer, and then man his master eats him also, only in more civilized and appetizing form. The sjambok, pronounced shambok, of this country is a whip to be remembered. The strips of which it is made go through repeated and continued soakings. They are then suspended from an iron hook in the centre of a gibbet-like erection, and a Kafir, possibly more than one, hangs on to them, leaping, and jumping, and swinging round and round upon them, looking like a dancing Dervish or a black acrobat in training, until each strip has acquired its expected hardness and is stretched until it can stretch no further. Telling of this process reminds me of another, equally primitive, one which was described to me, and which I may as well mention here. It is that of thrashing and dressing the corn. The sheaves are thrown upon the ground of a cleared circle of large circumference, and into this circle are turned ten, twelve, or even more unshod horses, a boy standing in their midst with a long bamboo whip to see that they tramp about briskly until the thrashing is satisfactorily accom-

plished. The winnowing, &c., is managed after as simple a method, merely by rubbing the corn through the fingers, and letting the wind carry off the chaff at the same time.

De Beere's farm deserved all the praise which had been bestowed upon it. His garden, unlike the Dutch gardens usually, had every kind of ordinary vegetable, as well as its vines, its fig-trees, and its small coffee-ground too. As a rule potatoes are alone deemed worth the culture here, and that to no great extent. Give a Boer his meat, bread, coffee, and his pipe, and who so content as he? We filled our canvas wagon pockets to their mouths with delicious oranges, many as large as small melons and twice as nice as they. We met at this place two young Englishmen who had returned from a trading trip far beyond Marabastadt, but lately hailing from that district. They addressed us by name, telling us that we had been expected many days ago. One of these two gentlemen looked fearfully ill, although he pronounced himself nearly well after an attack of South African fever, which had

reduced him almost to a skeleton. This malady is so long in its effects, and repeats itself so often, that it is greatly to be dreaded, and the districts where it prevails carefully eschewed. Quinine for fever, and strong ammonia for snake-bites, should be carried by every traveller, and let me suggest a little—no, a good big bit—of sticking-plaster too. The little forelooper who tried poor old Carolus's temper so sorely a few nights ago cut his foot a horrible gash with his hatchet. Out came our roll, and Mr. G—— plastered him up cleverly, he hobbling off to his bare-footed tramp again as if he had had a new foot to make a fresh start with. It is astonishing how quickly a Kafir gets over any injury, and how unflinchingly he bears any surgical operation when he knows it is for his good. I was told, in Maritzburg, of one whose head had been crushed by the falling of stone in some quarry. The bone was cut away and a silver plate put in. ("The beggar will run away with it if I don't keep my eye upon him," said the doctor who operated upon him.) He *walked* off after all was over, and

was well in a month. Much of this may be attributed to the simple diet and habits of the native of South Africa. Nothing but mealy meal porridge from year's end to year's end. Meat he so rarely tastes that it almost intoxicates, so potent a food does it become when thus seldom eaten, and then with such avidity and in such incredibly large quantities that the result is hardly to be wondered at. This meal, from the Indian corn ground, must have great life-restoring properties when men of such calibre as this "noble savage" are nourished into manhood by it.

Our driver told me how he had once cured a Kafir from a venomous snake-bite, which but for his presence of mind would have cost the man his life in half an hour. "I just whipped out my knife and cut open the place, put in some gunpowder from my flask, and set it alight. Puff! whiff it went, and then I knew, if I could get enough brandy to make him stupid and go to sleep, he'd be none the worse." The mischance occurring at one of the stopping-places where the horses of the vehicle he was driving were changed,

he was able to procure the remedy. The man became stupid, did sleep for hours, and when his turn came next day to take his share of the groom work he was "all there," albeit somewhat stiff, and limping perceptibly upon the convalescent leg.

This night we camped by the "Nile." Alligators are sometimes to be met with in it, but we met none. Lions are to be encountered hereabout too, but we encountered none, nor, indeed, anything worse than mosquitoes and midges, which, like the petty worries of life, have a power to irritate and annoy equal to griefs and perplexities which are called by bigger names. Hitherto we had been very free from these pests, but this we owed to a careful selection of camping-grounds as far from rivers, spruits, and morasses as possible, consistent with sparing Jim the labour of long water-fetchings. Sometimes these were inevitable. The animals, of course, keen-scented creatures, sought their own drinking-fountains, the one leading off, and the rest generally falling into single file behind him, as if seized with thirst as by

one impulse. How I liked to watch these our trusty friends, and note their idiosyncrasies and distinctive characters, for that each ox had a mind of its own, in spite of his share of the *collective* mind he owed to education, I am morally certain. Potbert, for instance, who might have been Colbert's twin brother, judging by the likeness between them, but that Colbert had quite a presentable tail, the inoculation not having punished his so severely as it had poor Potbert's, which had literally decayed in the process. It was easy to see that Potbert was by far the more cunning of the two, and by far the lazier, letting Colbert take the bigger share always when no one marked him, and, when the whip touched him up, or John's voice shouted his name in remonstrance, did not he put on an air of ill-usage and answer with a peculiar grunt, by which he hoped he would arouse our sympathy and spare himself the lash, shaking his long horns and twitching about his ears at the same time to add impressiveness to his appeal? Colbert meanwhile would pad, pad along steadily and willingly, seldom hearing

his name except in terms of encouragement or to guide him slightly to the right or the left, as might any good-natured, easy-going fellow who is ready to work double-tides to save a weaker or indulge a lazier mate for whom he has a regard, or whom so to help had grown from use into second nature. Romann and Normann, were alike and yet different also. The latter had his skittish moods, and would suddenly lead off to the right, irrespective of track or visible temptation, Romann following simply because he was his yoke-fellow and must needs go too, but testifying his objections, as any one could see with half an eye, as well as saying, dumb-alphabet fashion, "I told you so," when irate Jim had them by the leading-reim and marched them back into place again, sparing no term of reprobation, by way of marking his opinion of their misconduct.

Uppermann and Vedermann plodded on with small show of emotion, just following suit as from their position they could hardly help doing, but later on our own homeward way, when Vedermann lost his comrade by

fell disease, and had to be cast loose to follow us dutifully, he manifested his sense of the delights of liberty very comically. At first he kept side by side with his four working brothers, as though all unconscious that he was not working too. Gradually it dawned upon him that he must have dropped his heavy yoke somewhere, and that the wagon was no affair of his. He rattled his big horns against those of the leader first, as though he would say, "Look you there, I can go ahead as well as you," then he would draw back towards the wheeler, and intimate to him it was quite at his option to go or stay by him. John's whip would be a gentle reminder, for long as the whip is, a driver can lead as well as drive by it, that this was going too far, he must keep with his span-fellows even though he eased them of nought of their burden, so long as the master's eye was on him. But this was not always possible. John being caught metaphorically napping, off trots "Vedermann" for a nibble at a tempting-looking patch of grazing-ground which no ox could resist. Jim, who knows

he will have a long jaunt to bring him back, and yet is in too lazy mood to run after him at the moment, shouts in stentorian tones "Vedermann" (pronounced "Faydermann" the Dutch V taking the sound of our F, and the "mann," being like the same word in German or as a Scotchman pronounces our "man"). At this, habit conquers inclination, and back trots the truant and takes his place as before, to remain till opportunity turns him from saint to sinner once more. After a few tastes of the sweets of freedom he becomes thoroughly demoralized, and from at first having stood to listen and to retrace his steps for a few paces, even at my voice, from the back of the wagon, he disregards Jim now, who may shout himself hoarse, for the moment he sees him and his long whip, which had not failed to bring him to a sense of duty at the beginning, away he goes, even kicking up his hind-legs in the air derisively. Fairly caught, he knows resistance to be useless and submits to the inevitable—the farce being re-enacted at intervals to Jim's entire disgust, until we reach our destina-

tion, this little episode fortunately having happened to us within a few days of our doing so. I note it here because of its fitting in with my present text—as my Kafirs and my Dutch tales fit into it in their season, in addition to what I may find crop up in my notes as my narrative progresses. I have more to tell of the virtues of South Africa's faithful slaves and most trusty servants before I end my chapter. Their docility on being fetched back when inspanning time requires their services again, or when night closing they have to be fastened each in his own place to the trek-tow is interesting to see. With very little remonstrance do they leave the sweet grass upon which they have been feeding, at the command of the man who herds them in, all following, directly the leader they seem to have elected as such gives the sign to march wagonwards. Once there the reim is thrown round their horns, and as the name of each ox is called he turns or backs himself into the position he knows is his own for the night, and does not try to

leave it again. If the summons is for a fresh start, the yoke is raised and the name called, and the gentle, big thing bows to it literally and accepts his burden as a matter of course. Now and again if he is not quick enough he may get a thump from impatient fists which makes him clatter the trek-tow chain, causing it to appear as if it were not all free will; but this admonition is seldom needed, fractiousness in the beast clearly showing ill-temper and its result, ill-usage, on the part of the man who tends him. Oxen manifest great terror at the most distant approach of a lion, which they are usually the first to perceive. They do not need to hear him roar to know that he is near. Panic-stricken they fly helter skelter, yoked or unyoked, with the wagon or without—anywhere! anywhere! to get away from the enemy whom instinct teaches them so greatly to dread. Man who, as food, ranks but second best, the white man a notch lower still than a black man, being less savoury, in his lionship's estimation, runs as great risk from a

scare amongst his animals as if he met the foe face to face. Let us hope we may be spared an encounter as we pass through the special haunt of this monarch amongst beasts, upon which we are so soon to enter.

CHAPTER X.

German Mission Station—Bands of Kafirs, Amaswazis, and their mode of camping—Birds, flowers, and grasses—The Lion Veldt—Sport in the Transvaal—The tragedy of Makapan's Cave—The ruined Dorp—A fern lovers' Paradise—Kafir kraals and Mealie grounds—We reach our journey's end.

6*th July.*—"Our lines have fallen in pleasant places," say we, as we start after our breakfast from the German Mission Station, bearing with us as gifts the contents of a huge pan of oranges, of which refreshing fruit we do not tire, although we eat them wholesale. I could not be induced to call at the Mission house with my husband, and Mr. G——, partly because I had to be washerwoman and maid of all work, and partly because my vanity forbade. Who that has travelled out of beaten tracks does not know

the weather-browned, sun-burnt coating which creeps over the face at first, and which finally hardens itself into a mask? Darwin's theory, when looking at a visage sun-coloured into a rich mahogany, does not seem so utterly preposterous after all. This little personal bit I should have expunged from my notes but for the thought that as surely as men will by-and-by come to people the Transvaal, women will come likewise, and why should they not know what is in store for them? Let them protect their faces as they may, the air will tan them; therefore let them provide themselves, as I failed to do, with something to soften and relieve them.

We were very pleased with the Mission station in every respect. There was an air of settled repose, and yet of growth good to see. The Kafirs, men, women, and children all clothed, the women engaged in domestic labours, and the children trooping to school at the sound of its cheerful bell, as naturally as any of our English little ones at home. A foundation is laid for a church, and in its eventual uprising amongst them

the Kafir inhabitants of the place manifest much interest. It is their loving hands which plant flowers upon and tend the well-kept grave of the pastor who has been taken from them, and to whose memory they thus love to testify their enduring respect. "Lions are in full force ahead," we are warned, "and you had better keep a sharp look-out."

Our dinner-hour and its after siesta found us amongst fine, forest-like trees with spreading branches, some of which hung so low, interlacing avenue-wise over our path, that had our wagon-tilt not been tight as a drum, it must have been rent to pieces over and over again during this morning's trek. "Lots of Kafir camping-places here," remark our men. "Some of their fires are still aglow, so they cannot be very far ahead." Over spread-out boughs long grass dried into straw had been placed, forming excellent protection for night and day. Ten or twelve Kafirs sleep round the central fire they kindle, each with his feet to the blaze, like the spokes of a wheel.

Birds of all sizes and of brilliant plumage, chirped and coquetted around us, seemingly without fear. Hawks, eagles, buzzards, and the secretary-bird, besides many smaller sorts; none of the latter keeping up a continuous song, but twittering conversationally and apparently all in high good-humour with one another. Several of the parrot tribe peeped down upon us with that quizzical air common to their kind, as we fed under the boughs upon which they perched.

The secretary-bird is the great snake-killer of South Africa. With keen eyes it spies its victim from afar, pounces upon it, and seizing it just where by instinct it knows it can best paralyze the creature's powers of resistance, flies up into the air with it, and drops it from a considerable height, again and again, until life is extinct.

7th.—We have actually no lion adventure to record, and yet we are passing through their well-known lurking-places, and through the scene of more than one dread encounter. That we have escaped unscathed is not owing to any valiant defence we have made, for we

were called upon to make none, and, let me whisper it, we positively had not a gun between us, so what would have come of it had we been attacked I leave you to guess.

Hearing that a blaze was a safeguard, a blaze last night we determined to have. All hands collected huge piles of wood, so as to ensure three good fires at least. The oxen, our number having been increased by a relay of eight at the mission station, which had been sent there for our use, were fastened to the trees, instead of as usual to the trek-tow of the wagons, lest, in case of a scare, they should do the latter, and ourselves within them, damage difficult to repair.

Dawn usually finds the enemy on the alert, so as it neared dawn we opened our curtains to see whether our bonfires were as bright as they should be. Hardly a spark glimmered to tell where they had been! Shout after shout seemed to have no effect in rousing either our men or the Kafirs, so at last my husband got out and insisted upon their bestirring themselves, and lighting up the ashes anew, firewood in piles, of our last

evening's gathering, lying ready to their hands. Game must have been "plenty" farther away, and therefore our oxen escaped. Tigers are met with about this and other localities through which we have passed, and through which we must pass presently. Traffic and sport have driven these creatures farther away into the wilds, and it is principally when scarcity of game makes them reckless in their hunger, that downright attacks from any wild animal are to be feared.

We heard story upon story of adventures, some of quite a late date, showing that the wild animals of South Africa are by no means extinct. They prowl round habitations and seize their prey when they get a chance, but it is man who goes out to slay them whenever a "spoor," or footprint, marks that the thief is at hand, never resting till his skin is brought home in triumph.

Wherever there are baboons I was told there will be tigers, and this applies to smaller game generally, so the country may count upon its tigers for many generations to come. Those who love sport can have it, pure and

simple here. No battues, no "dilly, dilly, come and be killed" style of fun, but an exciting hunt, narrow escapes, sudden surprises, &c., requiring keen sight, steady aim, and an A1 rifle. Add to these, good powers of endurance, an appetite above squeamishness, which can even swallow uncooked food at a pinch, when fire is unprocurable (tinned food is too bulky for saddle-bags), unlimited climbing and walking capabilities, and an honest, whole-hearted love for an adventurous life, and what more can your thorough sportsman require? Indeed, I heard stories by the side of which Gordon Cumming's become almost tame and insipid, and we all know how few believed his were other than just travellers' tales, merely because they had never seen such things themselves, nor read of them before. One must hear everything for the *first* time, therefore why give credence only to repetitions? Tigers, or as they should more properly be called leopards, hunt in couples, as do the lion and lioness. Thus, killing one foe does not always ensure an end to the fight.

Both yesterday and to-day we have passed,

and then they in turn have passed us, overtaking us at our outspans, band after band of Kafirs, of many tribes, our men say—but principally the Amaswazis—who, being friendly to the Dutch, count upon them as allies against those of their own colour, whose hands in consequence are against them. These, with hardly an exception, carried guns, in addition to their "kit" strapped on to their backs, and which, as it mostly consisted of heavy karosses or skins, seemed cruelly heavy and oppressive under that burning sun.

Kafirs think nothing of walking forty or fifty miles a day, at a good swinging pace, keeping it up continuously, until their destination is reached, stopping at given times for their siesta, and gossip seasoned by snuff-taking,—snuff concocted out of almost anything, so long as it is of a potency sufficient to cause what is very dear to the Kafir heart, a series of sneezes, so long and so loud that the hills resound with them.

I took the echo for that of the cries of wild beasts in throes of anguish, until longer ac-

quaintance cleared up the mystery, and we knew that the unearthly sounds came simply from some twenty or thirty Kafirs snuffing round their camp-fires, revelling in the ecstatic sensation, which to the beholder seemed to follow writhings from an internal spasm. The hills are in a measure answerable for this, echoes always being tale-bearers.

These groups, peopling so quaintly the glades and park-like roads we are travelling over now, add just the touch they have wanted hitherto. Now we can desire no more. Life in plenty, animal and vegetable, and a sky of such blueness overhead that not one floweret or one blade of the varied grasses but seems to have on its holiday dress, and to say saucily, "Gather me, gather me! and let the folks in England see how pretty we are;" while the birds as they prink their bright feathers in the sunshine, take up the refrain and twitter, "If you can shoot us you may stuff us, and send us home, too, to let our sad-coloured brothers and sisters see what bonnie creatures we are!" They know,

cunning things, that we have no gun, or they would not dare to flout us so.

8th July.—We reach at breakfast-time Makapan's Poort, or the "Gate" to the territory of the chief of that name, the scene of a fearful tragedy about twenty years ago, when the natives, driven to desperation by Dutch oppression, retaliated after a manner so horrible that the memory of its sickening details ought alone to be kept alive for the warning it may afford against a harsh policy in future.

The man Potgeiter, whose lawless raids upon the natives brought matters to this cruel climax, almost deserved his fate, for what mercy could be expected at the hands of people whose children had been kidnapped and sold for slaves, and whose rights to the lands of their fathers, or even to the spoil their own hands had won for them, had been wholly unrecognized, or if recognized quite disregarded? Simple death was no vengeance worth having, thought these savages, lashed by their wrongs into the committal of ghastly cruelties, too harrowing for me to tell of, or for you to read.

The innocent ever suffer with the guilty, therefore, those who were nigh at hand, for trading purposes only, shared the fate of these marauders, who had dared theirs, and must have been in some measure prepared to meet it. News of the massacre reaching Potchefstroom, volunteers were quickly found to avenge it. Makapan and his tribe hid themselves in the fastnesses of the mountains, and in one of the caves, some of them 2000 feet long by 400 or 500 wide, of which there are so many. Here they stood the siege. Rocks were blasted above them, hoping to crush them in the falling ruins. This measure failed, so starving them out was tried. This failed likewise; and not until the more desperate measure still, of literally building up the mouth of the cavern, and burying them alive, was nearly, at a cost of immense labour, completed, did the beleaguered tribe come out to die, numbers having already succumbed within it.

Whether the ruined village we saw this morning met its doom at this time I could not quite gather; possibly later. Its inhabi-

tants had been massacred by Kafirs, all but a remnant, which was struck down to the last man by fever. It was pitiful, here at the very scene of the calamity, to think of their fate, and how much they must have suffered before the end came. The little "dorp," or town, had been a considerable one, judging by the size, and even importance, of some of its houses, all built of the dark-brown mud of the country, but with a somewhat ambitious attempt at ornament. The gardens still had defined fences and limits, and in many of them were trees yet capable of blossom and fruit-bearing, though fast becoming wild and sorely needing culture. Their beauty nothing could destroy. The walls were studded with bullet-holes, and bore other evidence throughout of having stood a siege, and testifying that their owners had not yielded without a struggle.

Shall I ever forget the fairy nook, or the little stream, so placid to-day, but which could, in the rainy season, become a torrent, by which we breakfasted this morning? It must have been the water-supply to the little

town whose sorrowful history I have given you. Sitting on its steep and winding bank, it was easy to picture the fever-stricken few, growing daily fewer and fewer, dragging their weary limbs to its brink, with barely strength left to fill their vessels with its clear, sweet waters, so that they might, whilst they could, slake the burning thirst of those dear ones who were hourly fading away from before their eyes, and whom they were sure only too quickly to follow.

"Patches of vivid green like feathers! what can they be every here and there, in the nooks and crannies of the rocks?" Maiden-hair ferns in wild luxuriance! What a fern-lover's paradise is South Africa! 'Ware snakes, however, if you are greedy, and must gather all that charms your eye. Bulbous plants in plenty, O bulb-fanciers! but bring a pickaxe at least if you must fetch away your prize.

I have of late ceased to appeal to your sympathies *in re* bumpings and thumpings, joltings and jinglings. These, if anything, have increased rather than the reverse, for

all these natural beauties have the effect of rendering the roads execrable and torturing our poor bodies proportionately. There is ever hanging over us the dread of the wagon not holding out until we reach our journey's end. When it has groaned more than usual, and has come down with a scrunch and a jar of more threatening import than at the last boulder which it had surmounted, John taps its wheels, shakes its body generally, and takes a survey throughout to ascertain the amount of damage, before we start hopefully on our course once more. This is our last day out, and, thanks be! there is a blacksmith at Eersteling who can tinker us into shape again. Kafir gardens and mealy grounds at the foot of hills and kopjes; round these we wend, and we are told that one trek more will actually be our last. It sounds too good news to be true, and when old Carolus suggests our outspanning for the night, so as to arrive with a flourish, as it were, in the morning, this being the *proper* thing to do, I stoutly resist. I cannot have bath, bed, and a roof over my head too soon.

My companions applaud my resolution, and uphold me in carrying it out. So, in the dim twilight, so nearly dark that the glimmer of lamp and candle from the windows of the houses in the little mining settlement we enter seems as a welcome, we, weary wanderers that we are, reach the "haven where we would be" and sink to sleep, oh! so thankfully, oh! so restfully! with our heads upon the real pillows, and our bodies between the real sheets which had been thoughtfully and kindly provided for us at the Company's house, the head-quarters of the manager of the mine.

Reader, here at this point, in transcribing my notes, I must lay down my pen for awhile. A very weariness creeps over me, mental, indeed, but akin to that physical weariness memory recalls so vividly that I almost feel it in every nerve as I write. Maybe the morrow may bring to me a power of utterance which fails me now, that I may tell you somewhat of our experiences here and further up the country still, before I touch lightly, but sadly and tenderly, upon the waves of

trouble which rolled over our heads, and which ended in stranding me upon life's shore alone, with much of its journey still to run, if God so wills it, but which bore him, my husband, all buffetings over, to that Rest in which He giveth His beloved sleep!

CHAPTER XI.

Eersteling—Gold-bearing reefs—Quartz-crushing—Cost of some of the necessaries of life—A day at the mine—Intelligence and docility of the Kafir—Feeding-time—A little about ostriches—Feathered ballet-dancers—Jack the Buzzard—A visit to the mill—Night.

20*th July.*—We have now been a fortnight at Eersteling, and its natural beauties grow upon us daily. Hills are around and about us everywhere, some in ranges, with here a gap and there a gap, or alone, standing out boldly with grand outline, and with smaller kopjes nigh at hand, bearing a fantastic resemblance to a huge old hen with a brood of overgrown chicks, fossilized for their greediness in the very act of meddling with man's own particular right, scratching and

grubbing for the gold which Mother Earth so cunningly hides and sometimes so unexpectedly reveals. It gives one a curious sensation, at least while the novelty lasts, to think of the untold treasures one may be at the very moment trampling under foot. Even to the least covetous there is music in the chink of the precious metal, and a beauty in its yellow tint; and who minds how gnarled, and bent, and be-holed may be the nugget, so long as it is a nugget? or who grudges the labour of seeking the "darlint" so long as it is found at last?

Though its gullies and spruits have been the home of many a nugget, and possibly hold the secret of many more yet to be revealed, yet Eersteling has more of reef than of alluvial gold. Some reefs have already been worked, others are in process of working, and more will be opened up when these are exhausted, if a further search confirms the promise which now indicates that there are treasures below worth the vast labour the search for them ever entails. Do any of you picture us sauntering about under our broad-

flapped hats and big white but colour-lined umbrellas, picking up here a nugget and there a "nobbly bit" of stone, flecked with yellow, putting them into our pockets as one does pebbles or shells upon the sea-shore? Not so, O inquirer; gold is not to be had for the bare stooping for it, although you *may* pick up a bit of quartz and cast it away again as valueless, all unknowing in your inexperience that a tiny speck was there nevertheless. "It is the mickle which makes the muckle" ever, and gold-bearing quartz is no exception. As cart after cart passes and repasses us, we know that the big stamps will have to pound away upon tons' weight of the burden each carries to produce at the end of the several careful processes yet to be gone through one of those handsome-looking cakes much about the size, and of much the same appearance as the slabs of ginger-bread dear to the school-boy heart. One was handed to me once with the somewhat late caution, as my hand nearly dropped it, from its unexpected weight, "Look out! it is heavier than it appears!" And truly, who could have thought so small a

thing could have been so weighty or could have cost so much time and labour to procure?

I think I might give here one day as a sample of this fairer half of our Eersteling life, before our horizon was darkened by trials, especially our own, and before I had to encounter the minor difficulties and petty disagreeables which, after all, I only shared in common with every "new hand" at South African housekeeping in the wilds, and which is common to inexperience all the world over.

During our stay in comfortable quarters, at the excellent house built for the Company by the manager, and occupied by him, we knew nothing of the roughing it in store for us. Given a well-stocked store-room, a good gun, and the secret of opening a Dutchman's hand by way of his heart, and it is astonishing how few of the necessaries of life a dweller in the Transvaal need miss, in spite of the long distances which his stores have to travel when they require renewal, and how costly the transit makes them. Sixpence per lb. upon the carriage of washing soda or

the commonest kind of rice makes either a dear article, and one to be used with thrifty caution. White flour, too! Give 10*d.* per lb. for it, and then see how "chary" of it you would be. Give 1*s.* per lb. for your salt, and your pepper in proportion, and pray would you not be content with a trifle less seasoning to your soup? Would you sugar your tea with white sugar when it "stands you" at twelve pence a pound? What work would you not accomplish by daylight if lighting up your room by candles at 2*s.* per lb. was not only costly to yourself, but very inviting to the winged creatures outside your windows? Would you trouble about starching your skirts to a stiffness worth naming if you had to purchase the means of doing so at 3*s.* per lb.? Would you not be content with less of a "lather" in your wash-tub when you buy soap at 2*s.* per bar? But I will not multiply my figures. These charges are the necessary consequence of the isolation of the Transvaal, its distance from a port, and its want of capital and population to open out its large resources. With the demand will

come the supply, and by-and-by my "quotations" will sound as absurd to the dwellers therein as they probably do to you now. Moreover, these are not, that I am aware of, Pretoria prices.

Suppose it early morning, 5 a.m., when you, were your clocks the same as ours, would be all wrapped in slumber or lazily opening your eyes for the sheer pleasure of shutting them again, knowing that no one is astir, and that therefore you need not be so either. It will be a good two hours more before your kitchen-maid slowly flaps her door-mats against the area rails, that she may prolong her morning's chat with the milkman, while your milkman himself is probably the only man who serves you, who is as yet about his business. With us all this is reversed. Every one is up and doing. At this luxurious stage of our sojourn I may as well confess that we were not such "early birds," but then we had our worms gotten for us. Later on we had to scratch for our own, and often came off second best, as you shall hear all in good time.

The steam whistle, shrill and loud as that which deafens the defenceless traveller awaiting his turn at any of our home junction railway stations, as the express flies screaming by him, "went" at 5 a.m. to the minute, to call up all hands to prepare for the labours of the day. Soon voices and footsteps passing the verandah announce that its call has had a quick response. The Cornishman and the Africander, as those born here, whatever land their parents may hail from, are called, the Dutch employé and the Kafir, are trooping by—some to the mill, where many hands are needed in the engine department as well as about the pneumatic stamps, some to continue the building of the second new chimney, which gives our little settlement a factory-like look, some to the quarries, some to the shafts, and some to the reservoirs, newly commenced as old ones dry up.

Oxen are fetched for the carts, and soon return, as they will be doing all day, except at the intervals for rest, yoked to their burdens, and hauling the quartz which will

yield the precious powder, some of it is but little else, about which all this pother has to be made.

I am more and more struck with the intelligence, within certain limits, of the Kafir. His is an unquestioning obedience to the order of the moment—give him two orders and he will remember none of the second. The sequence cell in his cranium is unfilled; but say to him, "Go there," and he will go, or "Do this," and you may be sure he will do it, and that not grudgingly or of necessity. It comes to him naturally to obey you. Humour your Kafir, let him sit down and snuff now and again when he has a mind to do so, and he will do all you tell him, with an air of cheerfulness and alacrity not common to white human nature, but do not trust him with piece-work, or let him allot his own hours of labour. Give him his fellows to shovel with him the earth from the banks of the reservoir, or watercourse, he is aiding you to construct in which to gather and husband the precious store at rainfall, or to load the carts with quartz for the mill, and

let a steady-going white man not only overlook him, but work with him as his "boss," and believe me, you have a good servant of dusky hue, who for small wage will do a good day's toil, and who while content with a well-filled porridge-pot for his every-day fare, will think it princely of you to grant him the offal from the slaughter-house at your weekly "killing," and "salaam" you with folded hands in token of ecstatic gratitude if you but give him snuff, real or imitation with which to tickle his nose, and procure for him that beatific sensation which sometimes culminates, not always, in that long series of sneezes with which he can awake the echoes, as he croons his tales around his camp-fire at night.

"It is good for you that you do not understand Kafir," I was told once, "or you would think somewhat less highly of the race."

"I am glad I do not," I replied, "for I do not want to think less highly of them than I have reason to do now."

Their language probably is not fit for Bel-

gravian drawing-rooms, nor perhaps for polite ears generally. Possibly they know no other name for "a spade" than "a spade;" but I doubt if an innuendo which indicates the same article on dainty lips in select circles, may not have as clear a meaning.

At 8 a.m. an hour for breakfast is given. The white men go to their several houses and huts, or, if Cornishmen, one of whom only has his wife with him, to their own barrack-like quarters, with a central hall for a living and eating room, their Kafir having fetched the water from the stream, and helped "the missus" to get ready their meal. Hungry as hunters are they, and should the weekly beef not have taken to the coarse salt kindly, testifying to the fact after a fashion of its own, of which no one would rob it, it goes down without more than a passing notice; for what sauce like appetite, and what sweetener like honest toil?

Each gang of Kafirs, each tribe, if possible, working apart to save clashing from incom-

patibility of temper or its like, has its cook to attend to the Commissariat. We have been listening to the monotonous tones of the store-keeper, as he counted into the sacks' mouths to each claimant his given number of measures of mealies. These he will first grind at one of the mills placed here and there for the purpose, and then in the form of mealy meal will convert it into the porridge he and his brethren love so well, but which to me is so suggestive of the bill-sticker's paste-pot, or that yellow-looking compound with which in such frantic haste our railway attendants be-butter our wheels at Paddington or St. Pancras. We have had our early coffee kindly provided for us by our hostess's order, but our real breakfast is to come. Meanwhile other live things want theirs, and the ground around the spot where the rations have been distributed literally swarms with animals and birds. The dogs may get a scrap of meat from the hands of one of the men who has come for some to carry home with him, *en route*, or as in the case of the three dingy sheep, with tails absurdly too long for

them, and upon which, (their bodies not their tails, I mean,) hang our sole hopes of coming mutton, they may have come just to see what is going on. They are there however. Flocks of pigeons swoop down cooingly, flirting their little fan-like tails so prettily and coquettishly, that I long to take them up and lay their soft wings against my cheek. What a feast they have, and with what a satisfied air do they wheel off into space, as they are warned off the premises by the later arrivals, the white-winged geese, and those large, grey goslings, heralded by the lordly cackle of the old gander, whose masterful deportment might have earned the praises of Mr. Turveydrop himself, and which had quite taken me in until his hiss of warning and of seeming derision, turned into a scream of positive terror. This, communicating itself to his wife and little ones, ended in their ignominious retreat before the coming foe. "What huge things are these?" I inquire; "how unwieldy is their gait! how clumsy their stride! and yet how jaunty their air! Why they are ostriches, I declare!" as a memory of exhibited speci-

mens of the genus at our own Zoological Gardens throws a little light upon the matter. High is their "action," as though each time they touched the ground they found it burning as with living coals, and jerky is each movement, as if their joints were hinged like those of the cardboard figures which caper at the touch of baby fingers upon the string which unites their heads to their bodies, and then permeates down to their toes. On the top of their stilt-like legs is the large body upon which, in spite of its draggle-tailed appearance, grows the rich crop of feathers which fetches so high a price in the home market, and which become the biped in borrowed plumes better than the biped upon whom nature originally bestowed them, at least in the stage at which I beheld the latter. The long, crane-like neck which moves with undulations half serpent-like, half swan-like, does not look as if it could form a passage for the large, hard objects it oftentimes conveys below to the scene of the creature's marvellous feats of digestion—a soda-water bottle gliding down easily, and a few ten-

penny nails being only like the pepper to it. Who would think that those mild-eyed, amiable-looking birds, giants though they be of their kind, could, if angered, or in self-defence, strike a blow powerful enough to slay with those long legs of theirs? They have such soft, baby faces, and such trustful eyes that one might credit them with every amiable instinct. While these four tame ostriches of the manager's are making a rapid "bolt" of the spilt mealies, let me just say one or two words about their own habits and those of their species in the wilds. Now ostrich-farming has become a special industry of South Africa, much more is known of their "tricks and their manners" than of old. What they like, and what they do not like, what is good for them, and what is not, is now ascertained to a nicety; for a disregard of seeming trifles in rearing them makes all the difference between good and bad returns upon the necessary outlay. The value of a chick of a week old being from 5*l.* to 10*l.*, who would care to risk losing its immense rise in value (I am told it is at the rate of

1*s.* a day at first, and even more afterwards), by failing to supply it with the alkaline element so wholesome for it? Limestone, carted to supply the want of it on the farm, it refuses, but crush up old bones, adding sulphur and salt, and offer your chick the feast, and see how much of it he will leave! Your bird will thrive well on Lucerne, clover, maize, cabbage leaves, grain, and even crushed quartz. I can't help wondering if these have put away a little gold amongst their gatherings! but artificial means are after all only supplementary to those of nature's own providing in soil, water, herbage, a wide scope for wanderings by day, and a warm kraal or enclosure by night. Your home-bird may only have one wife, or, if you are not virulent against polygamy, you may permit him two. But there is this against it besides the principle of the thing. Mr. Ostrich takes a full share of the domestic labours requisite to unshell the little ones his better halves people their joint nest with, and therefore he had better weigh the subject well before he assumes such heavy matrimonial fetters.

Like the old-fashioned cottage weather-glasses, when the lady is in the gentleman is out, and *vice versâ*, and he has also to keep guard over the sitters during the night lest evil happen to them.

In a wild state the husband must have a rare time of it, for he thinks nothing of undertaking four or even five wives, and to help them hatch, and to defend them from the many ills ostrich flesh within the shell or without is heir to must be no joke. Tigers will have them if they can, and crows will even fling down stones upon the eggs at a great distance if they get the chance. Worms destroy and climatic changes affect their well-being much. Dr. Watts might have named ostriches in his little verses on bad temper, with which we were all so well acquainted in our childhood, instead of the dogs which occasionally "delight to bark and bite," for when they fight it is apt to be to the death, and think of what loss to their owners comes of this giving way to their angry passions! If in fine condition, and at the right season, their feathers which they

maul so terribly in the scrimmage may be worth a price varying from 30*l.* to 60*l.* the pound.

From a very early age the little ones are turned out to grub for themselves as much as possible during the day, a young Kafir boy herding them with his long wand—a loafing kind of life much to his taste. His charges testify much affection for their caretaker, and he has hardly any difficulty in driving them home to their kraal at night. The first time we witnessed these creatures' performances upon being emancipated from watch and ward at early dawn we laughed immoderately, and never looked on gravely when we saw the absurdity repeated. They resembled nothing that we could think of so much as four gigantic but rheumatic ballet-girls, as they literally waltzed round and round, sometimes drooping one wing sometimes another, knocking against each other recklessly, but keeping up the dance until they reeled tipsily, and wound up the fun by nearly dropping like expiring teetotums to the ground. We threw them

no bouquets, and if they curtseyed to us as we cheered them by our plaudits they did so involuntarily, before gravely marching away at the word of command of their small black herdsman.

One more applicant for any pickings which may yet be left, and I will close my list: "Jack," or, as he is playfully called here, "the Manager's Canary." Jack is of the buzzard tribe, and I must confess that when apart from any member of his owner's family, I am afraid of that bird, and I consider myself a long way off from being a coward. He exercises a strange fascination over me nevertheless, for he is "a character," has as many tricks as a monkey, and is as thievish as a jackdaw. To hear him scramble over our "Gospel Oak" manufactured zinc roof you would think a dozen burglars were trying to effect an entrance through it. It is only Jack, however, who, having stolen the carpenter's rule or a bit of savoury meat from a pot over some unwatched fire, lifting off the lid and putting it on again being one of his accomplishments, has retreated out of man's

reach with his prize; but tin roofs are slippery, and will-he nill-he down goes clumsy Jack, who can get no safe hold for his big claws. He flies at you, seemingly straight at your eyes, when no one he fears is near. Once he spied me walking alone, and from a distance of several hundred yards made at me from behind, nearly knocking off my hat, and it was with much ado that I kept my feet from the suddenness of the attack. A bird's wing in my hat might have been the inducement, but I rather think it was just Jack's fun, one of his practical jokes. A shout brought me help, and by some well-directed stone-flinging, my assailant was driven away, after perching more than once with an air which threatened another raid.

It is our breakfast-time now, and Jack knows it to a minute. As we sit at table we hear an unearthly sound which defies spelling, and through an empty stove-pipe hole appears the long beak and neck of my torment. It is a matter of calculation for him to get through the aperture unstrangled, but the wretch does the trick, and is rewarded

by huge pieces of meat from his master's hand, which he cleverly catches and bolts with small show of effort. I am amused at Jack viewed at that altitude, distance lending enchantment to the view I thus obtain of him.

This day we take a trip to explore some distant parts of the estate, which are reported favourably upon as promising a future golden harvest. Four oxen are inspanned to the "trap," a large, high, two-wheeled affair, which might be a gig, or a cart, or a jaunting car. A jolting car it is safe to be, for we go over places which have no pretension to be called roads at all, and it all turns upon your powers of preserving a due equilibrium, whether you remain in the vehicle or are pitched bodily out of it. "Ride and tie" is the rule with all but myself, the luncheon basket, and the small miner's picks with which to break up any hopeful-looking specimens.

Our stony gatherings are deposited in the well under the seat for more leisurely inspection, and for after pounding in a huge mortar, the pestle of which is guided by a Kafir as it

hangs suspended by a stout string to the bough of a tree, its weight being too great for its continuous use unaided. The powdered quartz, Mr. B., whose practised hand and eye never fail to find the gold so long only as it is *there*, washes in a prospecting basin. To our inexperience he seems at first to be recklessly flinging everything out of it into the big tub of water over which he works and into which he dips it, at first frequently with a plunge, but towards the end of his labours very cautiously and by thimblefuls. When seemingly nothing is left, we are invited to inspect the tin bottom of the vessel, and there are the little, tiny flecks of gold, not sparkling as we had expected to find them, but with the warmth of colouring, and with the unmistakeable air of being the real Simon Pure himself, and not any of his many bastard brothers which have enough of the family likeness about them to delude at first sight even old hands. The mark of a copper-nailed boot on the clear white granite looks provokingly like gold, but what need to quote

"All is not gold that glitters," a proverb sure to be suggested by our surroundings.

I will not attempt a description of our visit to the office of the assayer, or of the process of amalgamation, &c. Mr. Polkinghorne, amongst his little pots and moulds, with the blaze of his furnace lighting up his face, might have been a Soyer amongst his saucepans, but away from the fires, his fingers deftly handling his bottles, his acids, his "tests," and his scales, he might have been an alchemist. That he was an able amalgamist, and by the magic of his art could turn all these tiny grains into the solid cakes of massive gold we handled, was a fact which needed no telling, for we saw and believed.

The masons have lost not a moment over the big chimney which seems to have become taller already, though our trip has not taken more than a few hours, and which is to overtop its fellow alongside. The Kafirs have piled higher and higher their stacks of the wood they have been chopping for the use of the mill. The engineer and his subs must

have had a hot time of it amongst the machinery. As they are sensible men, they have doubtless aired themselves during the day, by taking an occasional turn in the cooler "blanket-washing" department. I do not allude to a laundry, believe me, but unless those blankets were washed, pray where would the gold be? for they are traps for the precious dust, which they hold jealously, in spite of volumes of water being poured over them by the connecting machinery, as they lay in their long, sluice-like boxes, which are kept locked to guard their contents against next "washing day."

Before returning to our evening meal, we have a look at the cunning old horse which has to go round and round, treadmill fashion, to supply the water needed by the mill. If the flow ceases, or is irregular, it is well known that Bob is standing napping, or lazily blinking his eyes as preparatory thereto. A footstep, ever so light, and a Kafir's bare foot upon the thickly-strewn white sand, gathered after the quartz-crushing, makes no sound, and off starts the steed

with the innocent air of one who has known no intermission from his laborious task.

We meet party after party returning from their day's tasks, the same whose outgoings had aroused us soon after dawn—kind with kind you may be sure. The Kafirs of each tribe assorting together, but all alike in the manner of their march. Single file nearly all of them. Some shouting, leaping, or haranguing eloquently in sing-song tones; some chanting loudly, some wrapped in a kind of majestic gloom as if heavy thoughts weighted them. Only "as if," for no thought for the morrow troubles them, and their pensive air arises most likely from a consciousness that the large snuff-tube they carry through the oblong slit in the lobe of their ear is empty, and they have not the wherewithal to fill it. We shall hear the tum-tum of their drums presently (I must call them by that name, although I never saw the instrument which emits the drum-like sound), and see the light of their camp-fires, but not for very long. Nine or ten o'clock, at the latest, and the whole of our busy

community will be wrapped in slumber; no sound awaking the echoes of the night but the occasional "laugh" of a stray hyena, or the frantic barkings of Carlo and his comrades, as they tear in hot haste after a poaching jackal or a stranger dog which has no right of entrance here.

CHAPTER XII.

Our hut and our visitors—Housekeeping dilemmas—"Boxer"—A few words about ants—Insect pests—Kafir washing and mangling—Vagrant fowls—Oomfan's egg-hunt—True tales of snakes, &c.—A cure for baldness—Daager *versus* soap-suds.

29*th September*, 1875.—I will gather up the thread of my story which I dropped before we started upon a pleasant trip to the Haupt Busch Berg, or Government forests, some sixty miles away, here, in the funniest and queerest abode any living creature surely ever inhabited, and yet which has capabilities of comfort not apparent at first sight, airiness being one of them. To begin with, in shape it is like a Dutch oven with a pointed roof, and two square holes by way of windows. It is built Kafir fashion, twisted twigs plas-

tered with mud form its round walls, and twisted twigs over rafters covered with coarse grass its roof. In these twigs live and labour, ceaselessly, myriads of insects called "Borers," and as they work, perforating the wood, down come showers of their saw-dust upon our heads and paper if we are writing, or into our teacups and upon our plates as we eat. No name could be more fitting from our point of view as well as from their own. Other "borers" we have likewise. Lizards, tired of sunning themselves on the rocks outside, peep at us with their sly little eyes, and scud away when we return their stare. An occasional toad loafs in and out, and the long-bodied, many-legged African centipede, with its hard, ringed coat would as soon crawl up our walls, as along our mud floor, where, if we touch it, it curls up round and tight as a snail, pretending to be dead, but never making us believe him nevertheless. We generally prefer to toss him out of the door like a pebble, to scrunching him up under our feet. Indeed, unless my intruder is young and tender, I usually find I suffer more than he

does from my violence. Snakes have so far treated us respectfully, but we hear from others of too many snake experiences to count upon entire immunity from their visits. My husband put his hand upon one on the top of a post the other day by accident. The creature darted down it and away into the water in a second, both parties, being equally astonished, but, as A—— declares, the reptile manifesting more presence of mind than he, his horror of snakes being as great as my own.

A long cart-rope, from end to end of which hangs a chintz curtain, of a pattern so defined and distinct that its huge stripes might serve for the blue and yellow partition-posts of a travelling circus, divides our sitting from our bed-room, both of which are furnished with a contempt for luxury, and an absence of pretension, which Diogenes himself might be tempted to envy. No, I wrong him. A qualm of conscience warns me of the fact. I would not rob him of a laurel from his crown. He drank out of his hands, history records, to show that even a drinking-vessel

was *not* a necessary of life. We were glad of ours, I freely confess, and we should have been glad of many other things which to the Cynic were superfluities. Could we have brought up from Natal all the comforts we had procured in England, we should not have been put to so many shifts now, but of none of them separately, nor of the whole collectively, have I material wherewith to make a grievance. The comic element predominates so far. When I make a little pudding out of the dried peaches I get at the store, I make it in one of our breakfast-cups, and the pudding must be eaten if we want a cup of tea! My rolling-pin is a black bottle, and by easing off the stroke as one nears the neck end, it answers its purpose rarely well. Until I summoned courage to borrow a baking-tin, I saw staring me in the face the dire necessity of toasting my joint at the end of a stick, much as men on bivouac use their ramrods. Our table-cloth is made of towelling sewn together, and when it is dirty I wash it out, dry it in a twinkling, let the Kafir-boy dance upon it amongst other things

to mangle it, and who is to know but I have a dozen other lavender-scented fellows to it reserved amidst my stores? Of course I have not, but that is my secret. "My kingdom for a jug," I exclaimed one day, and Mr. P——, my ever-ready helper, sent me his only one, which lost none of its usefulness, if you were cautious at pouring-out time, because friction or legitimate service had worn away its lip. It is a puzzle where to stow away my stock for gravy, soup being a great feature in our *ménage*, if at the same time that rare treasure, a pint of milk, should fall to our happy lot. From the bed end of the bedroom we cannot see our larder, but we know it to be there, pickle-tub and all, and talking of the pickle-tub, a loan of great price in our extremity by-the-bye, let me snip out a sheet or two from home letters, which has a touch of apropos about it.

22*nd September*, 1875.— . . . . "Before I allude to your last letter, date 4th August, which arrived to-day, let me make you laugh over a funny opening scene in our new quarters. You know what an unconquer-

able dislike I have to raw meat—a butcher's shop being only a degree more repugnant to me than a fishmonger's—would that either of those respectable folks lived round the corner, by-the-bye! We had had nothing but pork for three days, and as pork is A——'s pet abomination, extending itself even to the living beast, you may guess how thankful I was to be promised beef in the course of the day, for an ox was to be slaughtered. To begin with I heard the poor wretch shot, and in what seemed no time at all, a large pan, a prospecting dish really, of almost quivering flesh was brought to me as our week's allowance, the Kafir popping it down on the table right under our noses. It had to be turned into something, as the vessel was wanted as a butcher's tray elsewhere. I had nothing but our wash-basin, and into that I let the man place it until I could cast about what was to become of it and me. Larder I had none, and to sleep in the same room with some fourteen or sixteen pounds of almost living meat I could not. Seeing my despair and disgust tempered as it was

with a chastened spirit of thankfulness for baked meats to come, Mr. G——, who with Mr. B—— was paying us, the one a business, the other a neighbourly visit, most good-naturedly offered his assistance. I shrewdly suspect he had as little inclination for the work as myself. I fetched in a board, the axe, and one of our three very blunt-edged knives, turned up the table-cloth (?) from our parlour table (?) and the struggle began. He hacked, he sawed, he chopped, but the result as far as getting a steaky bit, or even the resemblance of a joint from it, seemed as far off as ever, for the trek-ox was tough, and our tools required grinding. Mr. B——, looking up from his business talk with my husband, spied out our dilemma, and in a second had his sleeves up, gave a chop here and a chop there, here a cut and there a cut —and I had three small joints and a steak ready to my hand. Through two Mr. B—— bored holes, and slipped some string where-with to hang them up under our eaves. There, it is true, the ants will swarm over them, and the sun will dry them to an appear-

ance not appetizing; but still the result is less to be dreaded than if that beef were to share our sleeping accommodation. Mr. B—— will send us up a pickle tub—the tub—shortly, and he has left me two long loops with which to lower joint No. 3 into the brine. Should no such helper be at hand next week, I must tumble the whole mass into that pickle-tub with a pitchfork, and trust to chance hands to fish it out again.

Let me introduce "Boxer" to you—why so nicknamed I cannot tell. Boxer is our general servant indoors and out. More out than in, because Boxer has a mousy-like odour pervading him, in common with his kind, for which he is not to blame, and by which it is easy to discover when he is trying to sneak noiselessly by the window on some private frolic of his own, leaving me and my household work to take care of ourselves. Everything has its uses you see. Boxer may be aged anywhere between ten and twelve—he may be four-foot-nine—he is thereabouts, at all events. His wool sets

thick and close to his round bullet of a head, his eyeballs are, if such an anomaly can be, whiter than white, and his even teeth almost glisten as his wide mouth opens for a broad grin; and when he does not assume an air of supernatural gravity, a sure prelude to coming mischief, Boxer is usually grinning. The boy's forehead is round, and his nose flat; but his countenance has no other very distinctive "nigger" feature to mark it. Set Boxer down in a London thoroughfare with a white skin instead of a black one, and with a knowledge of the "patter" needful for his enrolment in the band, and none of our street "gamins" could hold a candle to him for capers and antics, for mimicry or for repartee, for cajolery or for impudence. Not that he is ever impudent to us, and if his opinion of us is an adverse one he wraps up his expression of it in such unintelligible "clicks" that our feelings are not hurt thereby. Boxing Boxer's ears was a trial to me I confess, but I came to that at last, and repeated the dose when I once discovered its efficacy. I had been before but a

poor thing in his estimation. At the first box, which made my hand tingle, but which I am sure, as Topsy said of Miss Ophelia's mild castigation would not have killed a "skeeter," I rose ten, then twenty, and at the end of the process full fifty per cent. in his estimation. His little black shoulders, one of which always would peep out of his blue-checked shirt, his only and sleeveless garment, Boxer elevated as close to the point of attack as my hand permitted, but no other sign of remonstrance made he. All over, a subdued air and resigned demeanour, added to a more rightly-directed activity, testified that his cure for the nonce was complete.

On the first morning of my hero's arrival at our hut door, he came out of the eight-foot square shed which forms our kitchen with a face expressive of excruciating pain, showing the whites of his eyes, making his limbs totter as if from weakness, and opening his mouth to a cavern-like width quite appalling, pointing down the chasm with the fingers of one hand, while with the other he

chafed tenderly his tight little drum of a stomach. Had a snake bitten him? had he colic? what ailed the boy? Thinking he had had his rations allotted him, I could construe his pantomime into nothing but a sudden attack of illness. Words being at that early stage of our acquaintance useless, I despatched him with a note to the "Inkosi," asking him to physic him, or else to persuade him that there was nought the matter. To my relief off bounded Boxer like a hare,—all limpness of limb gone, pain vanished, the muscles of his face relaxed into smiles of beaming satisfaction,—to return shortly with his bag of mealies, the very elixir of life to him.

The endless string of relations who visit Boxer,—women with their babies, and a small fry of tiny runabouts of all ages, men full grown, and youths in every stage of growth—have become quite a nuisance, and I am fast losing the mild courtesy and ready smile of welcome which have, "though I say it as shouldn't," distinguished my greetings to them hitherto. I have even waved my hand

to a whole row of them dismissingly, uttering in tones of decision not to be misunderstood, in spite of a limping accent, "Hamba! Hamba!" and on not being at once obeyed, have fired off the words double-barrelled as it were—"Hamba! Hamba! Taaté," a kind of quick-march order which even a dog understands here. Boxer having been in service before has picked up a few English words, and these he loves to air when an opportunity occurs. I ask him, on discovering without the use of my eyes that visitors have arrived, "Who is that? and that? and that?" &c. "Him, brudder of me." He grins as he sees me count my own fingers over and over again, by way of expressing that I might count them for ever and yet have none left for the last arrivals. His father, a petty chief, has fourteen or fifteen wives, so no wonder that Boxer in duplicate is perpetually turning up. Love for the porridge-pot has much influence over paternal and even maternal affections. Into it all dip alike, one spoon sufficing. No crockery is needed for your servants, and it is asto-

nishing how one saves in breakages by this fact, and also from having so little crockery to break. To wash is to "Soola," spelling all hap-hazard. Shall I tell you how Boxer's successor, a smaller edition of him, and a better, by-the-bye, in spite of my little story, once "Soola-ed." a frying-pan? I peeped through a crack in the door, and thus was I served out for my pains. "Oomfan," literally boy or youth, first of all clicked with delight at spying some greasy leavings. These he chased round and round with his finger, licking it again and again as it arrived at the starting-point, until no grease was to be seen. There might be a vestige left, however, thought the lad, and "Oh! how nice for my wool." Upside down went the pan, hat fashion, on his pate which he whirled like a mop therein, until I expected to see him drop from giddiness. He did nothing of the kind, and although to his mind no further cleansing was needed, yet, just a finishing touch with the tail of his shirt might give it a shine, and that should not be denied it. With a parting sigh of regret,

Oomfan hung the pan upon the nail appropriated to its use; where the ants soon swarmed over it in myriads, vainly believing that it was a feast spread for them.

So many of my minor worries I owed to these pests, especially at the last house we occupied in Eersteling, that I forgot what had so interested me in their marvellous instinct and industry on our way to the Transvaal, and frequently since during our strolls about the place, and could only think of them as just pests and nothing else,—not as the most wonderful builders and architects in creation. The Veldt over which we had travelled had, at times, been covered so thickly with their habitations, that, but upon the track itself, no wagon could have passed through them. Some were six feet high or more; some broad at the base, tapering upwards; some like a long funnel or post with a hole at the top. To watch these workers had been my great delight, the little dog, Flora, by my side even getting quite excited as the busy things fetched and carried long straws and bits of twigs, mud, or material of

all sorts, handing them down lengthways when athwart had proved a failure, to the little workers below. I had restrained Flora when she, wanting to share, or rather to spoil the fun, would attempt to lay her paw upon a few dozen at a time; or whisk all their labour into nothingness by a flourish of her feather-like tail. What must she think of me now, when she sees me of malice intent, and with an angry glare in my eyes, put on the kettle, "cook it" till it boils furiously, and then empty its contents upon the thousands upon thousands of these, my enemies, which devour my substance, crawl over my person, and almost make my very life a burden? No lid will keep them out of your saucepans, and unless you can swallow them by dozens in your food, you may dwindle away into a skeleton, ant-driven into your grave! Much of their power is owing to the free use made of their own material in the construction of our habitations. This gives them a right of entrance indisputably. Of such a hardness and consistence is the mud of their walls, that it costs man no little

labour to possess himself of the fruits of their toil and adapt them for his. Gunpowder has sometimes to be used to hollow out one of these ant-hills to make it into an oven, than which none could be better.

If ants teaze, do not fleas rival them?

If the one insect will not let you eat, neither will the other let you sleep. Fleas swarm, become almost tame, though never tractable, and are only to be caught after surfeit. Driven to desperation for want of rest at night, I would exclaim in my extremity, "What have I done that I should be turned into a grazing-ground for these remorseless little wretches?" As daylight dawned the torments, having done their worst, would feel sleepy. Then would come my time. Custom brought me surprising skill, and the basin ever ready to my hand, would show in the morning a sediment of drowned corpses of a depth and *stillness* which brought me a rich reward. Let no one intending to come to the Transvaal be daunted by anything I may tell of these petty irritations. Numbers will work a wonderful cure, and

by providing material will reduce each one's share of discomfort to a minimum.

The end of October sees us again, temporarily, in far more comfortable quarters vacated by a family leaving for Natal. Oh! the luxury that move secures to us—a whole house, and that of several chambers, six in all, high, open thatched roof, and actually one room with a boarded floor. A store-room was a possession I never thoroughly appreciated till now. Our John has contrived me a hanging safe, which actually keeps the ants out, but that is in part owing to this house being much freer from them than those on the other side of the estate. Over the open window he has nailed gauze. Thus our food prospects have brightened, and if I can only get enough, I do not fear our powers of keeping it.

Flora and Mr. B——'s big Carlo, who has adopted us, and of whose friendship I am proud, while I object to his stealing our provisions, had escorted the band of Kafirs as they brought over, piece by piece, all our belongings from the hut to our new house;

and now have a quite-at-home and "we'll-take-care-of-you air," comforting to witness. . . . . My food difficulties are increasing rather than diminishing, now that I have a place to husband it in. The weather gets hotter, and somehow I get more easily wearied, and have a longing for one of my own good old home servants to take my work in hand, and to give me a spell of rest. Turning our big "Kafir-grass" mattress tries my strength sorely. I generally sink upon it when its right end *has* yielded at last to my continued and somewhat puny efforts, and has consented to come uppermost; and the washing of my garments is effected at the cost of many a weary sigh. The result is ever that streaky and coffee-coloured linen must be worn by me, or none at all. Neither soda nor soap do I spare, and yet lamentable are my failures. Of course I am not bound to do my own washing, or half of the drudgery I voluntarily undertake; but much as I admire the noble savage as a savage, and admit his many capabilities for taming and teaching into great usefulness, I confess I am

not the woman to tame or to teach him, nor do I care to have him more about my home and person than is strictly necessary. A washing Kafir is allotted me whenever I request his services from the overseer, and what he retûrns after hard rubbings on a board on the bank of the stream, and a good sousing in its waters, is of a clearer hue than that which has had less of elbow polish in my india-rubber bath within doors. He often has to take back an armful of rejected shirts, skirts, and towels for wash No. 2,—an order he obeys without remonstrance; but, on the whole, he acquits himself at his task better than the "Inkosigas," who bungles hers so sadly. Hear him sing as he leaps and dances upon the linen afterwards to mangle it, and you would think he was loudly proclaiming the excellence of his own performances, and jeering at the failure of mine.

On taking possession of our new house, we purchased some poultry as a resource when other meat shall fail. The hens treated us generously at first, but South African hens

are sad gad-abouts, and indifferent as to where they deposit their eggs. The supply failing, I locked the hen-house, thinking to remedy the matter thus. Losing the key, a mishap not confined to country or climate, I applied to Oomfan in my difficulty. "What! dismayed by a trifle like that!" seemingly pooh-poohed he in voluble Kafir. He darts from the door of the kitchen to that of the hen-house, lays himself down on the ground, and elongating his body and compressing his bones by a "somehow" known only to himself, he wriggles through the hole, the hens' own private entrance, and out again, with several unbroken eggs in the tail of his dirty little shirt. The resources of that child are endless! One day, my poultry having decreased alarmingly in numbers, Oomfan returned from a fruitless search after the delinquents. By gestures he eked out his few English words so descriptively, that he made me as clearly comprehend his adventures as if I had witnessed them myself. "Me look! look, look, missus," he said looking here, there, and everywhere, with clever pantomime. No

wonder he failed, for they had been made a clean sweep of by thievish hands: possibly by a gang of our own Kafirs, who, while strictly honest during their term of engagement, on leaving for unknown parts might have recouped themselves for their good behaviour when beyond fear of punishment.

One of our oxen has been bitten by a puff-adder, while grazing in the Busch Veldt. I feel as if I had lost a link between us and home. This is the second ox so killed since we arrived. Big snakes, and venomous, are abroad; several have been seen, shot or otherwise destroyed. Our men stoned one in a vacant hut, of which the vermin had taken possession. They opened the window and heaved in a stone, and when the forked tongue hissed at the assailant there, through a crack in the door would come another small boulder, until he was fairly done to death.

We lent our wagon to the Manager and his family, for a little trip they wished to take for health's sake, our John acting as their driver. The oxen, by instinct, just avoided treading upon a huge snake lying basking on

the track, but disturbing him to fury. John tried to reach him with his whip, but had to leap aside, shouting to Mr. B—— at the same moment. The sound of the answering voice attracted the enraged creature to the back of the wagon, to the level of the curtain of which it had already reared itself for its deadly attack, when Mr. B——, with ready presence of mind, fired off both barrels and killed it instantly. I could enumerate tales and true histories *ad infinitum*, of snake adventures and narrow escapes, of valiant deeds in the hunting-field, and of hardihood and endurance on exploring "treks," for have we not in our midst our faithful story-tellers, who have gone through, themselves, or have witnessed others going through, each and all of these, and have we not our Baron Munchausen too! I say this in all kindliness, for what amusement has not the good baron afforded his ready listeners; and who, once having heard his relations, does not like to get him in the vein for more and yet more? He has shot lions by the dozen, and leopards by the score; has been nearly,

never quite, thanks to a clever shot in the nick of time, killed by rhinoceros and by buffalo. Three times he has been struck by lightning, once at the cost of every hair upon his head. He has now a splendid crop, but it is not every one who dare risk so dangerous a cure for coming baldness. Talk of hair-breadth escapes after that! Once, on the Veldt, a friend with him was killed by lightning as they rode side by side. Fearing lest the jackals should scratch it up, if he gave the body only the scant burial time and weather could permit, the baron lashed the corpse of his comrade to the tail of his faithful steed, and away the living rider and the dead scampered through the pitiless storm. All these, and more, I must leave unrecorded: for the budget from which I take my notes, will not thin in proportion to that other budget, which threatens to outgrow the limits to which I must restrict myself.

One omission has just occurred to me, and I may as well add it as a tag to this chapter, on my housekeeping difficulties in the Trans-

vaal. Picture my feelings upon the first occasion, when a Kafir came to "daager" or smear our floors. In his hand was a battered old zinc pail, and inside it was, not wholesome soap and water, the very steam of which promises healthful cleanliness; but an unsavoury liquid decoction, which you can obtain—should you wish to test its effect upon the floor of your wood shed or tool-house, nowhere else, pray!—from the fields where your cows graze, or the stable where you house them at night. The Kafir's hand served all purposes of scrubbing-brush or flannel, as he gravely and patiently plastered the stuff over the necessary places—filling up cracks, and leaving wave-like patterns upon the lower part of the walls, where skirting-boards would be, if here they did not rank amongst superfluities. The floors really require this process, or no one would submit to it, and it is surprising how soon the odour departs. You are driven out into the verandah for a few hours; but then may safely return to walk over your newly-smeared habitation without fear of leaving

footmarks—thankful as you replace article by article, all you have stowed carefully away to avoid contact, if you cannot trace the operator's progress by the prints of his dirty fingers. If they are there, they have not come of intent, for a Kafir treats your belongings respectfully, and never dreams of robbing you of them . . . . unless quite sure of never being found out. If you have a looking-glass in your room, take a peep at your man as he stands before it, gazing at his own reflection, lost in self-admiration, or self-contemplation, or both. If you have left a long hair-pin about, I think he *might* run it through his wool, to adjust it into the little ridges, or rolls, or furrows, or whatever especial fashion his hair-dresser, another Kafir, has chosen for his adornment, if he does not happen to have a porcupine quill or a long Mimosa thorn handy; and if you have caught him in the act, pray shake your toilet-cloth, if you have one, or scrub your table, if you have not.

CHAPTER XIII.

Illness—We leave Eersteling—Room for doctors—Small Kafir visitors—My first night on the ground—A storm—Our camp-scene—Here or there—Warm bads—Vaal Busch Fontein—Pinaars River—Pretoria, &c.—Buck—Bless-bok, Reit-bok, Rhe-bok, Spring-bok, Wilder-beest, &c.—Our broken wheel—Stander's Drift.

If I am to make my little record intelligible, I must not leave wholly in blank the weeks which intervened between my last date and that which found me sad and heavy-hearted, bracing myself for the task before me, i. e. conveying my poor husband, now alas! a helpless invalid, across that weary Veldt to the home he longed for, until illness or resignation deadened the desire which at first had been almost as a pain, and which had made him, as its realization seemed more and more

improbable, moan so sadly, and as I now know, so prophetically "I shall never see England again! You can never get me home!"

All this came true. I strained every nerve to carry out the promise with which I tried to reassure him, asserting and reasserting in my hopeful blindness that "I would! I would!" A higher Hand than mine has taken him home, over paths rough and thorny indeed, but what wayfarer thinks much of the crookedness of his path when his haven is reached and he has entered his rest?

* * * *

Increase of population will ensure to the Transvaal the supply of what is now a crying need—medical help in larger measure than is possible under existing circumstances. A doctor cannot always cure, but he can generally alleviate. If he cannot do much for the patient, he may give confidence and support to the watcher by the sick man's couch. There is room and plenty to spare for you, oh doctors! who are casting about for an anchorage in well filled old England. Come

over here, and if you do not exactly make a fortune by your drugs, they will help you to competence, and what with land or bird farming, gold grubbing, or a sleeping partnership in merchandise, it will be your own fault if you do not prosper.

29*th January*, 1876.—A slight improvement in my invalid warranted my leaving him, under Jim's care, almost for the first time for weeks, but both Mr. Polkinghorne, who had acted as my husband's deputy since he was first laid up, and Crowl, the mining captain, wished me to go with them through the works, which had so lately been accomplished with such satisfactory results, i. e. the tunnel which connected shaft with shaft and through which we could pass from end to end of the opened-up part of the mine. They were anxious for me to be able as an eye-witness to report upon the progress so far made, to their chiefs at home. I returned to find A—— worse, and thinking himself so, his having ceased to utter a plaint for so long makes his doing so now the more distressing in the face of the coming journey,

when he needs courage and endurance to supplement the remnant of strength his illness has left him. I have written these two names, Mr. Polkinghorne and Mr. Crowl, in full, and I think they will pardon me for it. I might grave them in gold for the honour I would do them in my gratitude for their help and counsel in this hour of bitter trial. The tongue dreads to utter what the heart yet feels to be true. Thus few knew what grave cause I had to fear that this illness might be unto death, until it was patent to other eyes than mine that so it might be. Until then I had spent nights of lonely watchings, with no human help within call; but these kindly hearts would not have it so any longer, and at first upon skins thrown on our mud floor, and afterwards with the slightly increased comfort of a stretcher bed, Mr. Polkinghorne eased me of half my load of care by being at hand to share my watch and ward, by doing thoroughly for our patient many of those offices which I, weakened also by illness and anxiety, had been able to perform so imperfectly. By day Crowl was ever at hand,

sharing the hours he could claim as his own, lightening even my household labours; thus freeing me for my sad watch or for the snatches of sleep which were so difficult to obtain, only leaving us when he had left nothing undone that his hands could find to do in our service. . . .

The wagon has been at our door for some days, and thanks to Crowl, who has attended to its internal arrangements, a mattress can be so placed that the sufferer will feel the jolts as little as possible, and it will not be necessary to shift him much at night. Home help too has come, so my husband is free to depart. The canteen which we so missed on our way up the country has been thoughtfully brought to us by his successor, and we shall return to Natal in far better travelling trim altogether than we could boast of on our way hither. Failure is a rare sharpener of wits, and no teacher is so impressive as experience.

Mr. Polkinghorne, with his chief's kind consent, has arranged to go for the first two or three days' trek with us. Words cannot

express how I am heartened up by the thought of this help and companionship at the outset. For the rest I must leave the issue in higher Hands. I have faith in the good feeling and honesty of purpose of our boys, and my own powers of endurance have stood the trial test so far well, that with God's help I cannot believe they will fail me now at my greatest need.

We shall travel over so much of the same route as that by which we came hither, that I need only transcribe a jotting from my journal here and there, until it tells of new ground. Visitors to the Transvaal are as likely to come by the one way as by the other, according to the season, or according to their inclination, for I do not think there is much difference as to distance. Your driver may be told by one in charge of a returning wagon, "Grass bad by the Free State route, better go by Newcastle," or *vice versâ;* and without preamble he turns his leaders' heads accordingly.

2nd February.—It was not until about 12.30 that all our good-byes were over, and

I with my invalid laid upon his mattress, took our first step towards home, and the health to which I fondly hoped it might restore him. The steady puff-puff of the engine sounded in our ears long after the big chimneys were out of sight, and I took the gruff music for kindly good wishes of "God-speed" to the travellers. Mr. Polkinghorne, in his trap and pair of horses, overtook us before we reached our first halt. At our dinner-hour we were visited by a troop of small Kafir boys, driving herds for their chief, Makkapan, or his successor, as the case may be. They assembled close to us to gaze at our proceedings, squatting one behind the other, on their haunches, almost upon one another's knees, quite a tight fit, hardly uttering a sound, so intensely were they interested in the spectacle before them. Our man made at them at intervals with his long whip, which he cleverly brandished so as to scare but not to hurt them. At his approach they would scatter to the right and left amidst shrieks of laughter, and then reassemble to gaze as before, until a fresh raid was made upon them.

Rain threatened before we inspanned, but we thought it well to push on. This we did valiantly for some time, but had at last to give in, for the downpour became a regular deluge, carrying all before it. The half-tent or fly was hastily thrown over the end of the wagon for me, and my cork bed and oil-cloth thrown down, and arranged as well as circumstances and narrow space would permit, upon the drenched ground, literally splashing as they fell upon my bedroom floor (?). My feet and clothes were already soaking, and of course not a chance had I of drying or removing them: thus my first night's experience of tent-life in South Africa presented its worst aspect at the very outset. My invalid husband's weakness made it absolutely necessary that he should be kept dry and as comfortable as could be in the wagon, but we could light no fire, and had to content ourselves with cold tea for our supper, Mr. P—— and myself eating, standing in the puddles, cutting our bread and meat, plough-boy fashion, with one knife, all we could get at, between us. This kind friend, crawled under the wagon

with the men, where he must have passed a most wretched and uncomfortable night.

* * * *

4th.—Sun shone out by about 9 a.m., when we breakfasted, dried what garments we could, and started again upon our travels.

Passed our old outspanning places in the Lion Veldt, but heard not a roar, nor did we trouble ourselves about the chance of coming across any lions, as we might most certainly have done. The terrible anxiety I felt lest my poor husband's strength should not suffice for the long journey before him made all other risks appear insignificant.

* * * *

EXTRACT 2.—*5th February.*—(We had camped by the Mission station.) We have only made one trek since morning, Mr. P——'s horses being so knocked up that he dare take them no further; so we settle to camp here, and be off on our several ways by daylight to-morrow. We have just obtained forage for horses, and some eggs for ourselves. A man from the wood bush (Haupt Busch Berg) has passed us, five days out from Pretoria. John says if

Pinaar's River be fordable at the short cut, and we escape heavy rains, he calculates upon getting us there in three or four. The roads to-day have been of heavy sand, trying the animals greatly. The men are not over-pleased at our having to lose one trek to-day, but that they speedily recover their good-humour, and seldom need to make the effort, I am glad to record.

Shall I picture our little camp and its surroundings? We shall form many a time just such a group before we enter into civilized life once more. The wagon is drawn up near the shade of one of the few trees, surrounded like its companions by low, straggling bushes, but not near enough to afford much shelter from the pitiless heat of this scorching South African sun. But for the breeze which the wagon catches funnel fashion, the curtains at either end being lifted to admit every breath of it, I could not be scribbling now seated as I am on the door-step with my knee for a writing-table, and a stump of a pencil—my priceless treasure, for my stock has run low—by way of a pen.

The tent, which, not requiring ourselves, we had lent to the Cornishmen who preceded us to Eersteling, Edington's strongest-made "Emigrant's home," pitched just on the other side of the track, has lost all its early freshness, and looks stained and travel-worn, but nevertheless not wanting in picturesqueness. Mr. P——'s high, two-wheeled trap, over which he had hastily rigged up a calico tilt to save him from the sun, stands jauntily on end, although its make-shift curtains have somewhat of a ragged and forlorn appearance, which would warrant a more dejected air in any country but South Africa. Here the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" principle applies to vehicles even more than to people, and the roads all travel through alike account for any scars or wear and tear traces whatever. It is flat ground mostly close to us, with marsh and occasional lakes of water, or what, to make my picture more worth the looking at, I will call lakes. They look like them although probably of no depth. High grass and long reeds wave gracefully about in the breeze, and marsh plants gene-

rally abound. In sight, but about half a mile away, stands a Dutch farmer's homestead, upon which our hopes centre as we count over our failing stores. Mr. P—— must have meat to take back with him, and when our tongue is devoured, as it certainly will be presently, *we* must have some to take on with us, for I want to reserve our two fowls, which are now walking about scratching for food, having made a clean sweep of their mealies, for greater straits. Large cranes flock about the marshes, making great havoc among the varied creatures of all kinds which people the swamps. Nothing eatable has fallen to our gun—one between us is our small allowance; but we hope for a taste of guinea-fowl in a day or two as we cross athwart their haunts. Until we get to Pretoria we must husband our small store of ammunition. A lazy mood, born of the great heat, is upon us all, man and beast alike. Mr. P—— lies stretched under a thorn-bush, upon a rug, like Joseph's garment of many colours, enjoying a siesta, a book having fallen from his hand, as if it

too was tired of imparting information, and could likewise relish a doze. John, whose scarlet shirt becomes his handsome dusky face and lithe figure well, drones a song between his intervals of tobacco-whiffing, as he too half reclines upon the ground, lazily happy, with enough of the Kafir in him not to care one jot what the next hour may produce so long as this one is pleasant. A rare lover of the "Dolce far niente" is John, although none can be more active than he when circumstances require it. Jim and Mr. P——'s Kafir, David (an old member of the Natal Native Police by-the-bye), gather sticks for the fire, which they must make soon, but which they evidently are in no hurry to do at present. "Ah! I thought so." Down they sit as I write, for a yarn and a smoke. I hear their voices humming, humming, mixed with the various cries, songs, and whistles of the many-hued birds around, and "caw! caw! caw!" Why, have our dear old Hertfordshire rooks come to welcome us home once more? With a sob half of pleasure, half of wonder, I awake to find my

precious bit of "H.B." rolled on to the ground at the foot of the wagon, where after a hunt and many a thorn-prick I find it, my scribble-book upside down with leaves awry, my old brown hat tilted over my nose, and myself in South Africa; whilst my mind, to say nothing of my heart, had been dream-haunting the home we love, and which we are straining every effort to reach. Our little camp is all astir. The fire crackles and burns furiously, for thorn-bushes blaze up quickly, rendering "cooking the kettle" a short process. We shall be glad of our meal, a nondescript affair, which we may call by any name we please, dinner, tea, or supper, so long as we *get* it.

The meal over, we stroll about, never going far; Mr. P—— to the farm, myself to the stream to wash out a towel or two, and the men, two of them, to drive the oxen and horses nearer to the wagon, to the trek-tow of which they are nightly tethered.

The glorious moon rises, and the sun, whose departing rays were unspeakably beautiful, taking away the great heat with

them, leaves us a picture with softened tints indeed, but one no less worth remembering than that of which I have tried to give you a glimpse during its noontide splendour.

By daylight on the 6th Mr. Polkinghorne had to inspan for his return to Eersteling. I concealed from him as well as I could how much I felt the parting from one upon whose goodness I had so relied, and which I should now so sorely miss. That I was deeply grateful he needed no telling, and I am sure that both he and Crowl will follow us in thought, during our wanderings day by day, with nearly as much accuracy as if they were actually with us.

We are stocked by the kindness of Mr. Byer, the Pastor at the German Mission Station, with bread, milk, eggs, and a large pan of grapes and peaches. Of the latter we had been having quite a feast from the Company's good garden at Eersteling, where bread and grapes had quite sufficed me for food of late. . . .

8th February.—We have passed the "Warm Bads," Vaal Busch Fontein, Pinaar's and

Aapes, or Ape's Rivers, &c., &c., and we have reached Pretoria, after a very speedy journey, John's eagerness to push on keeping pace with my almost feverish desire to get medical advice. . . . I have had it, and were I of less buoyant temperament, or perchance! less blind it would make me despair. This I will not do. Strength may be granted us to win through, and brighter days may yet be in store.

In my previous notes I touched upon the goodness shown me in Pretoria, on leaving which, after our protracted delays for repairs, we seemed to be starting almost afresh. I had occupied the tent by the side of the wagon during our ten days' stay in our encampment, only leaving it twice, lest the men might be tempted to absent themselves together. This they never did, however, even while I was there, without express permission, so I need not have mistrusted them. The heat by day made my canvas-house unendurable, so I seemed only to live at night, when lighted by the bright moon I wrote my English letters and journal, holding the paper in my hand, and using a pencil.

Some of my scrawl is almost undecipherable, and no wonder, for clouds will flit by over the brightest moon, and one's left hand forms by no means a firm or reliable desk. A lighted candle brought in troops of insects on wing, and might prove as tempting to the venomous as it did to the more innocent reptiles which harboured in the beautiful, wild rose hedge and little running stream close by, therefore I rarely made use of one for more than a moment at a time.

All our wheels had been taken off and renewed at Pretoria, and two green blankets were nailed inside the tilt to soften the glare and keep the wagon cooler.

21*st.*—Third day out from Pretoria. . . . John has shot one buck and wounded another, not beyond cure I trust, for it limped off on its three legs pluckily. I was only sorry the poor thing was hit at all. We outspanned on the spot, so that the men might skin and prepare the meat, i. e., cut it up; one joint to hang outside the wagon, and the other pieces to be cut into strips to be salted and sun-dried for the men to heat in the ashes, and eat thus

roughly dressed. This meat will be a great help, as what we brought from Pretoria, though the men like it, is uneatable by us. They still cook and devour the sausages, and like the salt pork, none of which I can touch. Having no proper place to keep it in, I know that the men stow it away indiscriminately with their boots and trousers, dirty blankets, and tobacco pouches.

I have seldom named the frequency with which herds of deer cross our path, and yet I have revelled in the sight of them. Thousands at a time often, each kind differing from another, and yet with a strong family likeness existing between all. John knows I like to watch the pretty, graceful creatures, and never fails to point them out even when he is not on murderous thoughts intent. Far away on the horizon sometimes we see them grazing, walking, or running, nearly always single file, with here and there a break. That each has its leader, and inferior officers to enforce by example his laws, is plain enough. Their demeanour betokens intense curiosity, and a desire to know all about us if they can,

without risk to themselves. As a wagon approaches they stand erect and listening, snuffing the air, immovable like a long line of statues, but as it nears them the word is passed on for a stampede, and then almost as if they kept step they bound away out of sight. Bless-bok, reit-bok, rhe-bok, wilder-beest, and the graceful little spring-bok or antelope—I believe we have seen them all. The first herd or two of the latter which crossed our track in the Free State in June last moved us all to expressions of rapturous delight as they bounded over the road, treating it as though it were a chasm or a river, one after the other choosing exactly the same spot for his leap. The horns of the buck of South Africa are not so branching as those of the deer we are accustomed to, but they seem just fitting to the well-posed, well-shaped head they surmount. The wilder-beest or gnu is more clumsy, and has a far more formidable look than any other of its species. Its meat is good. There seems a great risk of all these noble creatures dying out wholly in course of time, so indiscriminate is their

slaughter. Some of the lower class of Boers live almost entirely upon their flesh and the sale of their skins; so to obtain enough they build themselves "hartebeeste huts," which are miserable hovels, and there, with neither bread, flour, vegetables, or even salt, they exist upon the fruits of their wholesale destruction. Hunting parties on trek we occasionally meet, the skins of the animals of all kinds which fall to their gun being a large source of income, and well worth the hardships and exposure those must, more or less, endure who seek to obtain them on the Veldt.

The delay with the buck made our last trek, which was a long one, very late in ending, and the consequence was our night preparations had to be made in the dark—the result much discomfort. I had the half-tent only, and it was most unevenly pitched. It should be in the form of a V when up; but one half of the V being drawn too tightly, too much of it taken up in the process towards the one wheel, the other half would not nearly reach the other; consequently on one side I

seemed sleeping in the open air. This state of things was bad enough while a bright moon was shining, and I could see the stars blinking, and the wagon and oxen as clearly as by day; but when, about midnight, all clouded over and distant growls announced a coming storm, I cannot say I appreciated the situation. The wind soon began to blow a perfect hurricane, and the rain to fall in torrents. I had to hold on to the flying *sail*, which flapped about furiously, place my heavy bags, drag myself and bed upon whatever piece of the frantic rag I could seize between each gust, and make myself as strong and heavy as I could to keep my house over my head at all. The biscuit-tin containing our knives, &c., gave me endless trouble (which sounds absurd), for I could leave go of nothing to save it, and it danced and rattled about as if enjoying the fun, whilst I could only fear the steel might attract the vivid lightning, which was blinding in its brightness, to our more immediate vicinity—the wagon being the only object for many miles above the height of the unbroken ground. I dare say I may have

many more such nights, but this one will not be likely to be forgotten. Experience too will teach me to camp early whenever a storm threatens, and I shall take very good care, if I sleep in my V tent, that that letter is imprinted upon the Veldt in a more upright and scholarly fashion than it was on the night of February 21st, 1876.

Tuesday, the 22nd.—I got the men up at 4.30, for I was eager, soaked through as I was, to leave my wretched quarters. Had to strap up my rugs, &c., wet as they were. It usually takes from half to three-quarters of an hour to outspan and off, when tents have to be strapped to the wagon, although the men have done it in less, but a good deal depends upon how sleepy they are when called, how light it has become, and on numberless trifles; among the latter, whether I have felt equal to the strapping-up of my own belongings, so as to leave them no excuse of having anything to do beyond their own more immediate duties.

Those who know what nursing is in their own homes with every appliance and help

from others, a servant or a nurse to do all the little offices an invalid requires, and which a man in health can do for himself, can hardly form an idea of the difficulties attending the same, on a wagon journey upon the open Veldt, with only the occasional rough though very ready assistance of two half-caste "boys." Our treks have been long and weary ones, and oh! so hot and parched were we the while! A—— kept entreating to outspan, and begging for water. Sometimes the water is horrible. Live things like miniature crabs and snakes, and all forms of living things the imagination could suggest, seem to swarm in it. Sometimes it is only as thick as milk and water, but when one is parched with thirst even liquid mud is palatable. We had trekked for the second time for two hours, when John called out, "Look here, missus, it's worth your while to get out to see the work of that fine fellow, who called himself a blacksmith, at Pretoria." The wheel which had cost so much had a broken tire already. The iron had burst apart, leaving a gap of one and a half inches. Should it come quite off, as of course

it must, unless even John's resources extend to the power of mending iron without a forge, the spokes will get loose, and down will come the wagon.

We are many days away from help, and, as the Yankees have it, in a "considerable fix". John has bound it round with a good stout reim—"to reim" is a verb peculiar to South Africa—I cannot but think the first stone, keenly sharp as these stones or pieces of rock are, will sever the hide, thick as it is. We cannot help ourselves, however, so we must be content to go jolting on trying to believe all right, until the bump comes which will testify that all is wrong.

On to a reedy creek for an hour's trek—flat, bare patches of rock between patches of grass. Another "dab wash" in the streamlet—keeping my weather eye open for snakes, &c. Signs of a coming storm, so we settle to go no further to-day. Tent put up and all made "square" for the night. Patter-patter falls the rain, thunder rolls loudly, wind pitilessly rough.

Wednesday, 23*rd*.—Luckily I had the big

tent up last night, but how it has stood throughout that terrible storm I cannot tell. The door of it was turned away from the wagon on account of the wind. The oxen, stilled by the tempest, never moved, and much as they usually disturb me by rattling the trek-tow, grunting, snorting, knocking their horns together; &c., I could have welcomed the sounds as familiar if not wholly pleasant, rather than the unearthly howls of the wind amidst the reeds and long grass, and the whistling of the same through the ropes of my tent. The supporting poles shook and swayed about threateningly, so in anticipation of the moment of their fall, and feeling sure that in spite of all turmoil I must from sheer weariness certainly drop asleep, I placed my pillow over my face, leaving free one little peep-hole only for breathing purposes, to ensure myself from injury as much as possible.

I never can recall realizing more vividly the sense of being so thoroughly *alone* before. "The master" and one man were in the wagon, the other underneath it, but they

might have been miles away for all feeling of companionship afforded by their proximity. Had I shouted my cries would have sounded to their ears as but one of the many utterances of the night, had they shouted I should probably have said of their voices that the sound was "almost human!" Sometimes I could have declared wild beasts were quarrelling close at hand, or in a lull, that I could hear the snuffle of one poking its nose under the flaps of the tent. Fancy of course, but with such weird surroundings and with my mind tried and anxious, I do not wonder that I gave the reins somewhat unreasonably to my imagination. Strange to say fear never mingled with my fancies. I seemed to be acting in a drama, of which some one, not I, was the heroine.

On awaking, for the thunder had ceased and a steady rain set in, I saw it must be hours before we could start. We managed to get some breakfast,—coffee and biscuit between the heavy showers. The clouds began to break, and about one we thought we might venture a start, it having cleared enough to

give us hopes of a fine afternoon. We had a trek of three hours, stopping by daylight. Saw great herds of buck, John making several ineffectual attempts to shoot one, but could not get near enough. Had big tent again.

Thursday, 24*th*.—I called the men at five. Trekked to a farm, where Jim kept us one hour and a half for our coffee. There was no "firing" of any kind, he said, not a scrap of "drift" (dried cow-dung), and no wood for "love or money." It is absurd to see the avidity with which we pounce upon even old whitened bones, when thus in fear of going fireless! At a farm within a hundred yards of us John begged a sackful of this dried manure, the sole fuel of the country, and now Jim has no excuse for keeping us starving and parched, as we literally were. I could hardly get out cup or plate when our meal came. The farmer gave us some hope of our getting the wheel tinkered at a farm one hour and a half on horseback, i. e. about three times less than by ox wagon. This is the usual way of reckoning distances here.

John's constant "reiming" makes it just hold, but it is very shaky.

We start off in hope and not stopping for dinner, at last reaching our longed-for help. A nice-looking farm, with quite good out-buildings presented itself. Says John, "I'm sure, missus, that must be an Englishman's, it's too good for a Dutchman's," but he was wrong. A Dutchman's it was, and a surly, cross-grained one to boot. All the reply he would vouchsafe was, "No! —bellows broken." A fib, no doubt. John had said we were English, and that was at the bottom of the refusal. A German who happened to be there, said that if we went on "*two and a half* hours on horseback," we should come to the store by the Vaal River, and there we should be "put to rights." Off again, and passing a regular Dutch square-built, dark brown, windowless farmhouse, Jim succeeded in buying us a loaf for 1*s.* 6*d.*, not quite cooked unfortunately, but we were none the less very glad of it. Trekked on for another hour, then outspanned for dinner—some buck stewed with

rice, and not bad eating. . . . It has been getting colder and colder every day since the storm. During the night no rugs are sufficient to keep us warm. We expected to have but one trek to the store, upon which now our long-delayed hopes are fixed. Our not having broken down, although the spokes seem all starting out of their sockets, makes us believe that we shall *not* break down, for on no better basis than that can we found our expectations of lasting out.

Found ourselves bound to camp for the night, although we prolonged our trek beyond its usual limits. Had half-tent made very small and drawn very closely to the wheel, and thus managed to sleep pretty well, the "fly" of the big tent being thrown over the wheels. John lies under wagon. If there should be anything to shock the sensibilities of tender minds at home accustomed to the (oh, to be envied!) privacy of bed and dressing-room, in the fact that the man and I make believe to have a room apiece, whereas our "party wall" is formed of two very wide, open wheels, with a big gap be-

tween, my heels nearly touching the same—be it known to them that I *dress* to go to bed, instead of *vice versâ;* that we have no light but that of moon or stars, and that when John (or Jim) crawls to his repose, before his last leg has disappeared under his very dirty blanket, snores sonorous and loud announce that slumber enfolds him, as with a curtain, and my voice must be shrill and loud before I can arouse him at day-dawn.

Endless bucks, in immense herds, to-day. John had a good many trials to get one, but without success. He lamed a "Wilder-beest," which *limped* away. The wilder-beest is large, and something like an ox or buffalo, from what I could see of it. Once I said, "Look! there's a dog following us." "No, missus, that's a jackal." It trotted demurely in our wake, and then turned off to feast on the remains of a deer, which had evidently been only lately killed, but which was already nearly picked clean by the crows or hawks which swarm around it within a few minutes after an animal has fallen, hastening its end if the gun has not quite completed its work.

Later on in the day we saw two more jackals, with their dog-like shape and striped skins, just in front of the wagon.

Friday, 25*th*.—Our seventh day out from Pretoria. Trekked again from 10.30 to 1.30, when we reached the longed-for "store" safely, by dint of frequent wheel-tinkering and reim applications; but not one yard further would the poor, long-suffering thing convey us. Again we are told that there is no one on the place who can repair it. Picture our condition! John went into the store to make inquiries before we removed the oxen, and brought out the dismal news, with, at the same time, the offer of any help in her power from Mrs. Schwikkard, the store-keeper's wife, such as milk, bread, eggs, &c. This offer of kindness came like a refreshing shower upon a thirsty soul, for, oh! I have thirsted for a word of sympathy for some days past.

John's suggestion, that I should "see the lady myself," was an echo of my own wish; and indeed I had once got out of the wagon with that view, but had retreated on seeing

so many men, traders, Kafirs, and others around a wagon-load of skins, over which they were gesticulating and busily employed, seemingly occupying the master's full time and attention. I then did not know of the coming kindness which was so soon to be shown me, and a record of which I had better reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

With good Samaritans—The South African buck as food—Scorpions—The wheel mended at last—The Vaal River and how we cross it—Pèra Kopje—Futzammon Berg—Over the Drachensberg—Once more in Natal.

THE instant I spoke to Mrs. Schwikkard, whose warm, kind tones greeted me in pure English, with just a dash of German accent, I felt sure I had found a friend whose help I could as freely accept as it was freely offered. I was more glad to outspan than I could have believed possible, had I known an hour before that as far as the wheel was concerned it would be a useless stoppage. The wagon was drawn up near Mrs. S——'s house, where I was made welcome at once. From that moment, until we left Stander's

Drift (or Standerton, its newer style), four days after, gifts were literally showered upon us. The list would be too long to write; but I believe daily, morn, noon, and night, some good thing found its way to us. Eggs, milk, *fresh* butter, so delicious after our long abstinence therefrom; bread, not only the brown bread from the Boer's meal of the country, but actually white bread—the first we have tasted since we left Natal the 1st of June last year, now nine months ago! Added to all these good things, was the niceness with which they were arranged. A real tray, covered with a pure white tray-cloth (I had been used to make a towel of doubtful bleaching answer my purpose), and bearing dainty dishes, not one, but many, would arrive at our wagon door at each of our friends' meal-times.

No one who has not gone for so long a time without tasting anything prepared in the least degree as it ought to be, or indeed entirely without so many things counted in England as the bare necessaries of life, could understand the thorough appreciation of

them such a deprivation tends to cultivate. Nice things, nicely served! why I had quite a curious hesitation at fingering the pretty china ware placed before me. I feared my unaccustomed fingers might clumsily drop the clear, white milk-jug, or crack the glass dish which held that home-made jam! The knives, too, had a polish which dazzled me, and the plated forks were pleasant to look at.

Never shall I forget the true kindness which must have animated these good Samaritans, making them so helpful and generous to perfect strangers, stranded upon their shores. I had not looked for help, much less for sympathy until I could reach those dear ones who were anxiously waiting for our home coming to bestow it in large measure upon us; but here it was and plentifully shown by those who did not even know us a few days ago, but of whom I shall ever think as friends for always, whether we meet again on this side the grave or not.

I cannot leave my record of Mrs. Schwikkard's hospitality as finished without telling of her wonderful skill as a cook. She had

no meat whatever but buck, nor has she had any other for many weeks past. The variety of dishes she contrives to make out of that one animal is astonishing. One day it was roast buck, plain and undisguised, then buck cutlets, with egg and bread-crumbs, looking and almost tasting like veal, only as if the veal had become, like myself, somewhat sunburnt and weather-beaten. Another day the buck was cooked like hare, with a gravy and a kind of wine-sauce, which completed the illusion. Her hashed buck was very good, and now I have ready for the journey a joint of boiled salted buck, strangely like beef to the taste, and undistinguishable from it by sight. Through Mrs. Schwikkard's goodness we have renewed our acquaintance with fritters, batter-pudding and sauce, apple pasties, rice puddings, to say nothing of mashed potatoes and other vegetables. The Schwikkards have no garden, so she must either grow these things in her back kitchen, or say "Heigh presto!" and out they must tumble from a band-box or a pickle-tub. Crosse and Blackwell had

nought to do with it, I know. I had also a feast of apples and peaches. Now surely there must be necromancy somewhere, for, on these bare flats we have not for many days, nor are we likely to meet for many days still, with any larger signs of vegetation than the coarse, tall grass of the Veldt, with the pretty and varied wild flowers peeping between. Not a tree or shrub higher than Tom Thumb, and not a wild fruit of any description.

Talking of people living so much upon buck — "Bless-bok," "Spring-bok," and "Wilder-beest"—reminds me to say how seldom animals such as sheep and oxen in these wilds are to be bought. John tells me that the Dutch, with a kraal or fold full of sheep, go out after game rather than kill one of their stock. They like to accumulate —to get an immense herd—mostly, I fancy, for the sake of the wool. The Kafirs, again, also reckon their wealth by the number of their sheep, goats, &c.; but they literally keep them to look at, neither eating them themselves, nor suffering them to be eaten,

nor do they sell the wool. They will perhaps once in a twelvemonth sacrifice an ox, in preference, useful as it is, to one of their precious sheep, and invite all their Kafir friends, far and near, to a feast, for which they brew Kafir beer by way of having a real jollification. A most nauseous-looking compound this said beer is, by the way. Maybe no other such feast takes place for a year, during which they subsist on their mealy meal porridge, or on any roots or herbs they may find. A Kafir never stops eating so long as a mouthful remains. He likes to feel himself so distended that he can hardly move before he realizes that he has made the very most of his opportunity. My small Kafir servant-boy used to frighten me at first with the quantity of porridge he could stow away into his small body, which positively visibly increased in size in the process!

But to "return to my muttons," a most difficult thing to do literally where such excellent food is not to be met with.

Finding there was no chance of our wheel being repaired at Standerton, and realizing

the fact that not one yard farther could it take us, much less over the Vaal river close by, I fear I uttered one or two almost despairing groans before once more casting about for a remedy. The assistant in Mr. Schwikkard's store examined it, hoping good-naturedly to turn his talent for odd jobbing to account on our behalf. He shook his head over our rickety condition, and pronounced it impossible to do anything without full blacksmith's appliances. We seem for days to have had an invisible policeman always bidding us to "move on!" Each attempt at obtaining help being always responded to by the assurance that so "many hours on horseback" farther on, "So-and-so" might do what we required. "So-and-so" passed us on in like manner; and here again even these "So-and-so's," so anxious to help, so able and willing to do so in every other way but this all-needful way, were obliged to say regretfully "move on" too. But how were we to move on? that was the question. Three wheels could not take us, and our precious freight requiring such

tender care and watchfulness! I had one of my good "thinks," and asked myself, if Mahomed could not go to the mountain, could I contrive to bring the mountain to Mahomed? The blacksmith, "two hours and a half on horseback, but three times that by ox-wagon, away"—might be induced to come to us, but he could not bring his forge with him—so that thought was dismissed.

It was suggested finally that if a cross-grained Dutch widow could be induced to let out her horse and trap for the purpose, the wheel might be taken off and sent over to the forge to be cured. I despatched John instantly to the widow, trusting that he might not be above any blandishments to move what hitherto had not been considered a tender heart. But John returned with his handsome dark face many shades darker from vexation and disappointment. "No use, missus—she won't!" I began almost to think at this "She won't," there would be indeed "an end on't;" but Mrs. Schwikkard said, "We won't despair. My boy shall go, and see what he can do." Young Schwik-

kard, a bright, clever young fellow of about fourteen, returned, waving his cap as he crossed the Vaal river with an air of triumph. The perverse widow had consented, on condition that she was to receive 2*l.* 10*s.* for the job. Her Kafir must drive, but our man might go too.

It was a case of "needs must," so consenting to the extortion, it was arranged that by sunrise next morning the costly old rattle-trap was to start. We were by no means sure that the blacksmith would be at home, or, if he were, that he would do the necessary work even if he could, still we could but try. John borrowed a screw wrench and fixed the wagon upon it, having removed the invalid wheel ready for the morning start. He then asked me if he might take four of our oxen, to help a friend whose wagon had stuck in the Vaal. I could not say no, knowing how likely we should be to require the same good office from others. It was getting quite late (for us), 9 p.m., and still no John, only the sound of the running waters of the river, and the shouts and

yells of the people at the wagon trying to urge the poor animals to greater exertions. It is a long job getting out of a regular South African "stick-fast." Presently John arrived, leaving his friend's wagon still sticking in the mud. He was beginning to fasten the oxen to the trek-tow when down went the screw-wrench, letting the wagon fall all on one side. Fortunately A—— was out of it, and thus was saved what might have a good deal shaken him. We had our animals fastened to a stake driven into the ground, and some packing-cases were placed under the axles as an extra support.

26*th.*—John is off with the wheel, which he had to roll down to, and then over the river, to prevent a delay in getting horses and trap across to fetch it. No hope of getting him back to-night. Jim had to be absent for three hours after our cattle, which had wandered for miles. I was, thanks to our kind friends, independent of his cookery, and so could manage well. On his return he washed his own clothes, and a few of ours, a shirt, a table-cloth, &c. I also, in spite

of the heat, and by making little dashes at my work, washed out, in the india-rubber bath, some garments of my own. I should be sorry to be cross-examined as to their colour! Any way they had a *good look* at *three* waters, a large share of soap, and as much "elbow polish" as my poor tired arms could afford them. Turned out wagon —rearranged mattress. Another supper tray, cutlets and mashed potatoes this evening!

28*th.*—A dreadful thunderstorm last night, but by covering myself entirely in two oil-cloths, I kept pretty dry, although, as I got up, I shook off pools of water from them. Did not sleep much, expecting the tent would fall down upon me every moment. Got "off" before daylight. At six A——'s call from the wagon brought me out. He too had had a sleepless night. At 3 p.m. young Schwikkard came within a few yards of us (they all respect most delicately A——'s desire to see no one), calling out "Mrs. R——, the wheel is coming," and very soon John arrived, saying, "Missus, we must start now," bustling about to put it on. Mrs. S——, on my

running over to tell her of our thus hurrying off, said, "You cannot, cannot go. I've two white loaves baking, a joint boiling, an apple pasty preparing, your potatoes to get, some milk to boil to fill your bottle with, &c., &c., and, besides, look up! a storm is coming." John had to yield, but his wish was to cross the Vaal before the storm came. About seven I called to bid "good-bye" to our friends, feeling real regret at parting. John had to come for me with the umbrella, as the storm had commenced again in full force.

29*th.*—Shrove Tuesday of Leap Year. Mrs. Schwikkard sent us two nice cups of coffee with cream. I then packed up bath, basin, dried cork bed, and rugs, and while folding my red shawl, to my horror I saw a mouse-coloured crablike-looking object, soft and yielding to the touch (if touched), and I felt by intuition, though I had never seen the creature or its relations before, that it was a scorpion. Jim instantly stamped upon it, saying, "Yes, missus, that's a scorpion, sure enough." John, hearing him, called

out, "Why, missus, I killed a big black one in your tent last night, when we were sheltering there during the storm." This was pleasant hearing! I must have had the thing carefully cuddled up somewhere very near my neck all night, during which I had fidgeted, arranged, and rearranged the wraps and oilcloths continually, trying to keep out the wet, and might easily have put my hand upon it. This little episode will not add to my comfort, or promote my slumbers when I retire to my nightly quarters. I had nearly recorded a day or two ago how odd it was that although people about me were daily seeing and killing snakes, &c. (Miss S—— saw one in their house, her brother killed one only yesterday, and our men have killed several at different times), yet I had come across nothing venomous myself. Now I have done so in such close quarters, I cannot say I like the sensation.

"Standerton is a horrid snakey place, missus," says John.

By-the-bye, while so often quoting the men's words, I must mention that the

"Missus" is in constant use. For instance, I should not be asked, "Would you like the fire lighted, missus?" It would be, "Would missus like the fire lighted?" or, "Did missus call?" "Missus had better hold on, bad place coming," &c., &c.

Our friends gathered on their bank of the Vaal to see us go over it; John perfectly positive that however others might stick in the muddy and steep bank on the other side, our oxen would pull us through. We crossed the river easily enough, but hardly had they planted their feet on the other side, when, in spite of shouts and whip-crackings, and the frantic tugs of the poor and really willing beasts, it was soon evident that we were to come off no better than our fellows. Jim lost his footing, and let go the trek-line. How he did not get trampled under foot, I cannot think. The leaders turned directly round. One rolled over just by the wheel instead of being twenty yards straight in front, catching its horns in the spokes, nearly wrenching it off in its attempts to free itself, and in its frantic plunges snapped like a thread our

huge "dissel-boom" or pole, lamed itself a little, and by its example demoralized the others, who all crowded together, plunging and struggling to keep their feet. The "look-out" soon spied our mishap, and sent their own two Kafirs to our help. I was glad I had rejoiced the hearts of these men over-night by one shilling a piece, to them a fortune, over which they had clapped their hands, and lauded me to the skies as a tip-top "Incosi-gas." They had hardly come, when, as if from the sky, helpers, white and coloured, literally swarmed around us. I should think we had ten or twelve. One, the step-son of the surveyor, sent off for six of their own oxen to add to ours, he and John splicing the dissel-boom meanwhile with those wonderful reims. After a hullabaloo loud enough to deafen one, and after I had insisted that A—— should be lifted out when our turning over seemed inevitable, the whole twelve, from having been in a crowd here, there, and everywhere but in their places, suddenly ranged into proper form, and with one frantic struggle our poor little wagon was hauled up

the bank. It had been literally imbedded in mud, the Kafirs digging away the clots from wheels and door-step before the final pull took effect. Settled into his place again, A—— and I finished our "tiffin," which we had solemnly commenced whilst sticking in the mud, he eating his rice-pudding, and I taking occasional nibbles at the large apple pasty Mrs. Schwikkard had provided for us. Their big Kafir fetched me "Mooshla Manza" (nice water) from the river, and seeing me holding my own muddy india-rubbers and A——'s slippers, which had some mud on them also, he took them from me without my asking him to do so, and with a big white jaw-bone, teeth and all in it, which was lying by, scraped them, rubbed them finally quite clean in the long grass, and, turning them upside down to dry in the sun, left them by my side without even looking for a word of thanks. Young Mr. Scrubin had sent for two iron bolts or clamps, and he and John made more permanent repairs, but the breakage of the dissel-boom closer to the wagon could only be spliced

with reims, and with it thus we must make our way to Newcastle, where it is to be hoped we may procure a new one. We may have to go through horrible places with this dilapidated pole, but one learns to take these kind of things very easily, never doubting that if we come to grief again, John will find some way out of the difficulty. It was 11.30 when we waved our last adieu across to our friends on the other bank, and fairly started on trek once more.

Stopped at 2 p.m. at Cat-bush Spruit, and shortly after at "Footpath Spruit." I am sure any foot set thereon would have soon disappeared beyond redemption. However, our pole stood the strain, and this promises well for its strength in struggles to come. Camped at 7.30. Growls of thunder and flashes of lightning, but only slight rain fell. Had half-tent, and a dry night fortunately. John and Jim had a scorpion hunt before I retired to rest. A trap and pair of horses, with a Kafir driver and a young Dutchman (both had helped us in the morning), had come up to us. As they have shot a buck, our men

have successfully begged of them a leg thereof, to their great delight. We had seen them every now and then, on the Veldt, now here, now there, the horses actually being made to pursue the buck, trap and all at frantic speed. John told me that they often did that. I asked if they did not frequently upset. He said, laughing, "Oh, yes, missus; but they don't care."

March 1st.—Roused the men at 5.10. Got off at a quarter to six. Trekked till 7.30. Outspanned for breakfast by a Dutch wagon, and bought a pan of hard, tasteless peaches for a shilling. Still they are better than *no* kind of fruit or vegetable. The men cooked for themselves a store of bread, i. e. fried pancakes — not bad eating either. Had a very long trek to a Dutch farm, where was a garden and fruit-trees, but only a Kafir happened to be at home, so we could not purchase bread or fruit. Our scenery now has quite changed. We are skirting in and out among picturesque, though not very high hills; and the relief is great after the endless miles of unvarying flat, our road like a huge serpent winding before and be-

hind us, and the monotony of our journey broken only by occasional floundering in the mire, over the rocky bed of an empty spruit, or through a full one, neither being perceptible until we are close upon it. We have been shaken mercilessly just now; our course, to avoid a swamp lower down, being round a part of the base of a hill which resembled a huge stone staircase, over which we had to get somehow—jolt, jar, scrunch, jingle, bump, thump, until we literally landed upstairs! One fine Kop or Kopje we passed upon which grazed an immense herd of fine oxen and heifers. As the sun cast the shadow of some flitting clouds upon its top, travelling down its sides, causing their reflections to flicker over the feeding beasts, I longed for the ability to sketch the scene, so as to convey some notion of its wild beauty to friends at home. This Pèra Kop or Horses' Hill (Pèra being the Dutch for horse, consonants all Continental) is so called from the numbers of horses always grazing there owned by a Dutch farmer who goes in for horse-flesh on a large scale, and is actually nicknamed the "*horse devil.*"

Trekked till seven—at the last lighted partly by the young moon. Crossed the rocky bed of a bad spruit just before outspanning. The driver always tries to get over any bad place at night, so that the oxen may have a rest and start fresh in the morning. Mosquitoes very troublesome. I am much bitten; A—— does not complain, so I fancy they do not visit the wagon so much, which is more closely shut up, and no lights admitted.

March 2nd.—Off at 5.30. Trekked till seven; going through one place so bad and boggy that Jim sank above his knees. I could not help trembling for our pole. We got through all right however, and outspanned for an hour, but could have no fire. Managed to cut a sandwich of our nice white bread and salt buck, so A—— and I had a very good meal, washed down with the cold tea I always keep in our flask. We have exhausted our lemons, I am sorry to say, but may get more farther on. From now we may meet with stores and farms nearly all the way, but at the stores only *imperishable* eatables are to be had. At the farms bread

and milk may occasionally be procured, but usually as a favour, and granted grudgingly to the *English.* The hills, as the rising sun lifted up their several curtains of mist and cloud, looked very beautiful this morning, as we threaded our way along the flats beneath them. Sometimes the valley would be a small one, more closely embraced by the kopjes around; then would follow a broader flat, and the hills would seem to have receded. We are now at the foot of the "Futzammon Berg," and a storm has come on just as we were about to inspan. John says, "Missus, if it doesn't soon clear, we won't get up the Berg to-day; too slippery." This is bad news; I had so counted upon reaching Newcastle on Saturday. As I write I am watching the angry clouds, which look spiteful enough to keep us prisoners till morning. It is only 1 p.m., and we have already been here three hours. I had the misfortune, at our last stopping-place, to leave behind the top of our canteen, which formed of itself a cover to canteen, a stew-pan, a wash-basin, a dish, and sundry other things. I had used it

to wash my hands, and thinking I might be glad of another dip, left it on the grass outside. The men inspanned suddenly, and both they and I forgot to look around as we usually do so strictly.

We are now just opposite Gibson's store, and a man, building a larger one close by, gave our boys some shavings and a little piece of plank—no mean gift where wood is so costly. Jim tells me he has no coffee roasted; I have had to give him tea until he can find time to brown his berries in a frying-pan, and between two flat stones to grind them. . . . .

The men are stowing away their things, so I suppose they mean to venture. They are whistling and singing duet fashion as happily as possible, in spite of being wet through.

Two p.m.—We are inspanned and just off, although it rains steadily, but with a prospect of clearing. We are first to mount the side of the Futzammon Berg, then descend again round its other side; very steep it promises to be both ways, John says quite as steep as *the*

Berg, the Drachensberg, or Dragons' Mountain, which we hope to cross to-morrow, and which divides the Transvaal from Natal. We shall cross the Drachensberg in another place, less steep than that by which we travelled to Eersteling. By this route we cut off the Free State altogether

3.45 p.m.—The sun has shone out, and we have accomplished the chief part of our task. We are nearly but not quite over the Futzammon Berg, having come to grief at a horrible little spruit, or mud-hole, directly in our path. We got through it, but at the cost of our pole, which snapped in another place, and I cannot see how John will ever repair it for us to go down the Berg to-morrow. It was terribly short before, now it will not be the length of the hind oxen! He has many resources however, and has just started off to borrow some tool he requires from a wagon which has been stuck for the last five days in the spruit, 300 or 400 yards below us, and which we must get over somehow to-morrow. The thunder is rolling loudly, resounding through the hills. There are trees in the

kloof, or small ravine, between their different peaks and risings, the first we have seen, with the exception of the few peach-trees in the farm gardens, for many a day. We are told that the Buffalo River, over which we are shortly to cross, has been very full, that a fortnight ago a number of wagons were detained there for ten days or more, and that one was carried away bodily and never recovered. This reconciles me a good deal to our delay at Pretoria, for had we not stayed there we should most likely have had to wait on the banks of the Buffalo River without provisions, and with greater discomfort than was possible there. . . . John has come back and is tinkering the pole, but as the rain is pouring down I suppose we shall make no attempt at moving to-night. . . . We are not to go, my tent is being put up already.

3*rd.*—We have had such a wet night. The tent was soaked through, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could keep even tolerably dry. Started at ten minutes to five. On till nearly seven, when our pole and trek-tow gave way at a nasty, short, mud-place, the

oxen being freed at the first snap. John has been over to a farm, and for five shillings has bought a young tree which he is now constructing into a dissel-boom. I do not think we could possibly get over the Drachensberg without it. As John works I tell him how the men used to go ashore when going up the rivers from York Fort, Hudson's Bay, to Manitoba, to cut down a new mast whenever their old one came to grief, and he seems much amused at the coincidence.

Our broken old pole provides us fuel to cook our breakfast with. Without it we could have had no fire, and must have been content with cold tea.

Again we are warned that Buffalo River is full! Grievous news indeed. The wagon we have just left sticking in the mud which we passed bravely through, was kept there twelve days. It seems the water comes down with a rush, and the rain we have been having has of course caused it to rise considerably.

3.30 p.m.—We *have* crossed the Drachensberg, and as it now towers above us I am

almost wondering to find that something akin to regret mingles with my emotions of gratitude that that stately range stands between us and the Transvaal, and that our feet are safely planted once more upon the soil of fair and kindly Natal.

CHAPTER XV.

My vermin hunt—An adventurous "trek"—The Buffalo River—A coal fire—Another custom of the little Bushmen—Natal Native Police—Mr. Shepstone and his influence over the Natives—The cost of a wife—Fireless again—We cross the river—Newcastle at last.

PROPERLY speaking, my tale of our "Trek in the Transvaal" should end at the last word in my last chapter, but as it would never have been written at all had there not been some hope of the record proving of use to others who might travel over the same ground, I should surely leave much of my task uncompleted did I not tell of our trek to it and from it, as well as in it; so, I will take up my notes where I laid them aside, at our first outspan on Natal soil on the 3rd March:—

The men are amused at my "vermin hunt" at night. This morning as they rolled up the tent they spied a wee frog *outside*. Says John rather roguishly, pointing to it, "This little frog didn't see missus last night, or he'd have got into missus's tent." Outspanned in the pouring rain, no thunder, but a steady downpour, by a store where we could obtain nothing, as only a Kafir was in charge. Many mountain streams have crossed our track to-day. They added to its picturesqueness, but they rendered it nearly impassable. We have come down almost perpendicular heights, just broken by stony stairs. The jolting can be guessed at pretty accurately from that fact. This would be followed by a plunge at the bottom into a rocky or muddy stream, just narrow enough to seem to swallow up our two front wheels, which had to be violently tugged out first, the hinder ones following in their train, by the willing though whip-urged animals, which dared not be allowed to stop a moment, lest the struggle should be harder, if not impossible. Even in spite of my "holding-on" attitude, so that I

might not be tossed quite off my insecure seat, I could not but gaze admiringly at the natural rockeries covered with lovely ferns, none of which I could get, and at the lights and shades cast by the fitful clouds over the many hill-tops mounting one above another all around us.

4th.—The rain turned to more of a drizzle, none the less soaking.

We can see no hill-tops for the mist. The curtains I have admired on the distant hills, as the sun raised them each morning, are anything but beautiful on a closer acquaintance. They wet one like rain, even if one is fortunate enough to have escaped the latter. 12.45. Since our start at a quarter to eight this morning, we have had a most adventurous time of it, going over roads (or rather no roads), to which those of which I have hitherto told are as molehills to mountains. We are now, have been for an hour, and are likely to be for an unknown time to come, stayed upon the side of a precipice on what is called by courtesy a road, with eight or ten huge buck wagons, heavily laden, and in the transport

trade, blocking our way. Some of them are stuck fast, others blocked like ourselves. But I had best be circumstantial, and tell my day's history from the beginning. . . .

Within half an hour of starting we were so fortunate as to procure of an English farmer a loaf of bread for one shilling and sixpence, and a fowl for one shilling. Bread dear and somewhat coarse and bitter, but fowl very cheap, and even if it should turn out tough, is a feast to look forward to. We had also a gift of a bottle of milk. We got on fairly for another hour or more over boulders and through mud, with the usual bump, thump, jingle, jolt, getting safely through spruits and even through the Buffalo River and another, or a branch of the same very near it. On for half an hour, when there appeared a steep hill in front, but not looking worse than many others. We certainly saw a wagon sticking fast, and heard the usual ominous shrieks, howls, yells, and whip-crackings, which are supposed to be the most efficient way to induce oxen to pull harder and yet harder still. Our men called out

laughingly to the Kafir drivers, and cheered our oxen on by their side. I must own to experiencing a kind of patronizing pity for them myself, and an eagerness to show how cleverly our six fine animals would drag our little wagon "over the course"! The thought had barely crossed my mind, as they were bravely tugging us over the boulders, huge ones like rocks by the sea shore ("sich a getting up stairs as I never did see," and certainly never *felt*) when ss-ccc-rrr-sh, try to pronounce it, and with a wrench which "burred" through one's brain like the tug of a dentist's forceps, this was what happened to us:—

The pole had held on firmly enough, but the whole of the ironwork, bar, &c., to which pole and trek-tow are fastened had given way utterly, and there the wagon stood, with its hind-wheels firmly set against a big rock, the rattling *débris* of the wreck hanging to the freed beasts. It had been a trial which was the stronger, rock or oxen. The oxen had done their very best, without the stripes and shrieks their comrades close by were

enduring, but the rock (as rocks usually are) was immovable, and won the day. John and Jim set to work at once with reims, literally tying on the pole and trek-tow to anything they could lay hold of, on one side to one of the springs! and thus, held by a thread as it were, we have had to come on, knowing that this most terrible hill must be descended, and that we can get no better repairs till we get to Newcastle.

Meanwhile the poor oxen of the other wagon were being thrashed cruelly, making my heart ache for them as they struggled very hard to pull their load "upstairs." One or two were wise enough to turn right round and strike out at their persecutors. I admired them for it, and only hoped it would gain them some immunity from their cruel punishment. At last a companion wagon sent ten more oxen to help, and the difficulty was overcome by twenty-six which had baffled sixteen!

We trekked on steadily over rather better roads, till we came to the top of this hill, *the* hill which John had already told me was a

very bad one indeed. No words can describe its badness. I insisted upon walking down, as every pound weight saved would relieve the strain upon our patched dissel-boom during our perilous descent.

About midway, the pass being very narrow, two wagons had to pass us. One went by easily, being light, the other heavily laden, had literally *thirty-six* oxen, (three spans) to tug it up. We drew to one side, and as I watched most anxiously, I saw that it would be a miracle if our little wagon were not "scrunched up" by the big one, or shunted over the precipice which yawned below us. The oxen were crowded together, the horns of some of the middle ones getting hitched into those of our wheelers, sending their yokes up in the air. Seeing this, I insisted that A—— should be lifted out. Most thankful I felt when I saw him safely placed upon a boulder, for, from weakness, his movements are tremulous and slow, and I feared that the crash might come before he could get free of the door-step. It was curious to see the thirty-six animals at last steer clear

with their load, nearly the whole of them being driven right up the opposite bank, leaving us at last actually uninjured.

Where we now are outspanned is in a safer place, as much on one side as can be, whilst all those troublesome wagons bar our way. We had hoped to get to Newcastle to-night, as but for this delay we could easily have done. We have another river to cross first, and we do not know if it be full or not. At Newcastle we shall probably be detained for repairs for two or three days. Another bill to add to the big one at Pretoria!

5th March.—We did not get off till 4 p.m. yesterday, and travelled over fairly flat ground after having first descended our stony precipice with its running spruit at the very bottom, before ascending the opposite hill with the usual bumpetty, thumpetty accompaniment. About six we approached our next descent, and how we achieved it in safety will ever be a matter of wonder to me. The strain upon the oxen and the patched-up pole must have been very great. There

was no drag to keep the wagon back, and the pole and chain were only loosely held to it by the leather thongs tied any way. We were often as it were on our beam-ends. Now side-ways, now corner-ways, would come more and more stone stairs to tilt us up, until it seemed as if we should never get *righted* again. Had the catastrophe which finally overtook us occurred coming down instead of at the foot of the hill, we might have been very seriously injured, for the wagon must have rolled down the steep side. The moon had barely risen (what there is of it now), and the daylight was waning, but Jim is a good forelooper, and moreover implicitly and instantly obeys John's instructions, all safety on trek depending upon this prompt obedience.

At the foot of the hills are deep fissures caused by the water, which in storms rushes furiously down, making huge gaps where it gathers before taking a fresh leap, and careering off again. When these gaps come close together, as they constantly do, no good steering can avoid them, and the

luckless wagon must go in, and the poor oxen must tug until they get it out again.

It was in one of these that we stuck last night. Again came the *ss-ccc-rrr-sh* and the wrench, when the dissel-boom, and a still larger portion of the iron work, was parted from the wagon, leaving us helplessly immovable. Oxen seldom shy, and behave with the greatest philosophy under any adverse circumstances, only getting restive when thrashed *too* unmercifully. My first feeling was one of great thankfulness that the last mishap of the day, which I had been expecting would occur every moment, had taken place where it did, and that nothing but further delay, much inconvenience, and a good deal of expense could result, instead of broken bones or broken heads, as might have been the case over any one of the numberless places we had passed during this really eventful day. Fortunately, we had no rain; yet we have had no entirely dry day and several *entirely wet* nights for nearly a week.

5*th*, *Sunday*.—I almost forget what Sunday is like, it is so long since I have been inside

a church, and but for my diary, I should miss the day itself, I fear. At Pretoria the church was closed, no clergyman being there now. At Eersteling no service for many weeks latterly, and on the Veldt the Sabbath has nothing to mark it. In A——'s state of health I cannot think it wrong to move on, when remaining still provides us with no healing influence, and it is of such vast moment to us both to get the journey over, and medical care and treatment as speedily as possible. John has gone off a three miles' distance to some wagons, or perhaps even as far as Newcastle for help to get us on to the near bank of the river, which we are now told is full, and "that we cannot possibly cross it for days."

One good thing we have, i. e. a coal fire; Jim is busy roasting his coffee over it. Coal he can get almost for the picking up. The place, rightly named Newcastle, abounds with it, but transport is so dear that but little is conveyed elsewhere.

Here comes John, alas! *without* the tools he hoped to borrow The wagons were just

preparing to cross the river, and did so before he left. These heavy buck wagons can get through, the water coming a good depth inside them; but we must wait, as our small vehicle would be instantly carried away. How the boys will mend the dissel-boom I cannot surmise, still I am sure they will do so, "somehow," although they have exhausted all our large stock of reims. "Can we take missus's tent-poles and ropes?" they ask. Of course they can and do. I most earnestly hope they may not break, for without them I shall be roofless to-night. No makeshift of a pole could withstand hurricanes such as my canvas house has had to hold its own against with the greatest difficulty hitherto, and will have to do often again.

We are surrounded by Kafirs, their kraals and gardens, and have bought some mealies, and six fresh eggs from them. They keep coming around, talking to our boys; men and women too, with their babies rolled up in either great warm furs, skins, or blankets across their backs, but they seemingly ask for nothing.

"Would missus like to know how the little Bushmen women carry their babies?" Missus would like to know, and is told that they cut a hole in the arm, and another in the side of each girl-child, for her to carry her baby in when she is old enough to have one! This sounds very horrible; but it is asserted with great gravity, and I am fain to believe it, while I rejoice that civilized manners and customs are so much more humane.

Three or four Natal native policemen have just gone by. Over their white blouses, neatly trimmed with braid, and lettered according to their division and rank, they wore the military overcoat so dear to the Kafir heart, and which, upon black, trouserless legs, has such a comical, not to say startling appearance. They were "after" some Kafir defaulter. On my expressing surprise at a Kafir catching a Kafir, the men laughed and said, "they'd go after their own father, if only Mr. Shepstone told them to."

I suppose in no colony has any one man ever attained to such power and influence

over the native mind as Mr. Shepstone has over the Kafirs'. He is their lord, their master, their king, and they have for him the still dearer title of their father. Issuing a mandate, he has only to say, "I am Shepstone, who are you?" and the expression means volumes, and is understood in its fullest significance. For over forty years has Mr. Shepstone been employed by the Imperial Government in native affairs at the Cape, and at Natal. It has been well said of him by one who had a good right to say it—that of long personal experience—"without Mr. Shepstone the Natal government, in its administration with the natives, would be as a ship without a rudder." This is high praise; but surely only what is due to one who has, by his tact and delicate handling, often averted war and its horrors from the land of his adoption, keeping in check the wild passions of the thousands which would, once let loose, crush with overwhelming force the handful of whites who alone could oppose them.

A wee little Kafir boy, with nothing upon

him but his "moochie," or tails, drives by a herd of calves. As he hops, skips, jumps, and "antics" along, he seems—the little, dark-skinned Puck—a fitting attendant upon the miniature troop. Just before him, astride on a young ox, rode a bigger boy of about ten years old, driving a herd of young heifers. Until to-day I have never noticed the ox used thus before, and only twice as a substitute for a pack-horse. These animals are intended to buy brides with by-and-by, and are cherished accordingly. The transaction is an open and acknowledged one, and the lady is proud to go at a high figure. It is the only sense in which she cares to be dear. I am reminded here of another curious Kafir custom. A Kafir has certain people whose names he dare not utter—his mother-in-law, for instance. If he has to make an allusion to her, he has to beat about the bush in a most absurd manner. Should her name in Kafir be "Cow," he might say, "the mother of a calf!" A wife may not utter her husband's name. Should it be "Ilange," or the sun, she must find a synonym for it.

If "Fire," she may describe a fire indirectly; but, "Oh no! we never mention it," must be her motto. Such names being very common amongst the Kafirs, I leave you to guess how much their readiness of wit must be taxed. A young wife is forgiven a few slips at first; but any after ones are visited upon her as crimes, for then she would be considered to be wilfully calling down evil upon her husband's head.

6th.—We *did* arrive near Newcastle last evening, just before a slight thunderstorm. We were literally pulled over many a rock and stone, over three spruits and several holes, by the oxen lashed just by ropes, tightly twisted to the end of the dissel-boom, which was also in its turn thus simply lashed to the springs and to any unbroken iron projection which could be made available; the trek-tow upon which the full force is always spent not being fastened to the wagon at all, only to the end of the pole. However, here we are on the bank of the river, looking at Newcastle over the way, and hoping that we may be enabled to cross before many

days are over—to-day we could not. I am going to send John across in the boat for provisions, i. e. bread, meat, biscuits, and sugar.

7th.—John returned last evening with—oh! rare treat—two most delicious white loaves, just like English ones. Meat also, a large joint for three shillings. The men can eat large quantities of meat (at Eersteling they were allowed twenty pounds a week each), but they go very cheerfully without any at all if none is to be had, and it is often their sole food. John has brought me letters forwarded from Eersteling by Mr. Polkinghorne. Home letters always, greedily as I seize them, and longingly as I look for them, leave me with a sore heart, so I could *not* have written a line after receiving them yesterday.

This morning, having no fuel whatever, we breakfasted with cold water as our beverage. I have sent Jim four miles back to our old camping-place, i. e. "*Mud-hole* Creek," where coal was to be found. He has brought a sackful on his head, enabling us now, at twelve, to have a comfortable meal.

The river rose rapidly from the great storm yesterday—Kafirs having to swim over with their bundles on their heads. A young Englishman rode up to our wagon-door, asking, "Is the river crossable?" "No, you must swim your horse, or stop on this side, as we have to do." "Thank you, I'll see if I can get him into the boat!" I suppose he did, for we saw him no more. John reports a slight lowering of the water, but our wagon dare not venture until it is quite low.

Mosquitoes terribly troublesome. Says John, "Missus, I was properly bit last night;" my reply was, "John for several nights I have been very 'improperly bit.'" There are some small flies which devour one also night and day. On Jim telling me apropos of some occurrence on the road, "No, missus, John wouldn't *help a Dutchman*," I said, "Why he is half a Dutchman himself." The answer was, "He don't mind that, missus, the Dutchmen are too cheeky. If you ask how far to water, they say, 'Oh! half an hour,' when most likely it's half a

day. They always tell you stories on purpose." Last night we were kept awake by three or four visits paid to our oxen by a large herd of about a hundred of their brethren, which in spite of John, his whip, and my own frequent rushings out from my tent to shake my skirts, and shout, "Shoo! Shoo!" would return to surround us and to give "bellow for bellow" to the beasts chained to our trek-tow, so far demoralizing them, that they would not keep still, and made the noisy remonstrances which drove sleep from our weary eyes. The strangen animals very nearly had my house over my head from their catching their feet in the ropes.

8th March.—5 a.m. I was up at 4.30, and down at the river to make my own private observations. Current very strong. Oxen drinking therein, sinking deeper and deeper. John has placed a stone to mark the gradual decline of the water. Only when that is visible shall we attempt to cross. On my way back I picked up the almost infinitesimal shavings of wood which nothing but

reckless extravagance on the part of previous travellers would have permitted them to leave at their out-spanning places, none bigger than a lucifer match. An old gentleman trader, whose wagons camped by us last night, passed me to have also a look at his chance of crossing; "Good morning," said each of us, I showing my small gatherings, hardly perceptible without spectacles, in the palm of my left hand, added, with a lugubrious shake of my head, "a very difficult matter to light a fire." His reply was uttered with an expression of face, such as we each tried to outdo the other in producing when we played as children that absurd game commencing "the Emperor of Morocco is dead." We parted after this depressing interchange of civilities, and I believe we both sighed for the next five yards of our separate ways. Firelessness means ineffable discomfort. I gathered about five more scraps to bear back triumphantly to Jim, who was struggling to set his damp coals alight, and who received my treasures with due gratitude.

6.15 a.m.—A storm has commenced—wind again enough to blow down the half-tent, and steady rain. I fear all hope of crossing to-day has come to an end. John, unfortunately, has got out his concertina. I do not like to stop his amusement, because so much depends upon the good will and kind feeling of the men. They love to whistle and sing too. Of songs they seemingly have an endless *répertoire*, mostly the airs, which they hum and whistle duet fashion without words. They have each a good ear and a great talent for mimicry, especially John, who sings and plays all he hears, imitating voice, manner, and style, man's bass or woman's contralto, with ludicrous fidelity.

At 9.45, rain ceasing for awhile, John said if we hastened to inspan he thought we might cross the river. Hurry, skurry, and all was packed, portmanteau, &c., mounted on top of mattress, so that if the water came in nothing should be injured. I had some difficulty in getting my poor invalid to consent to go in the ferry-boat, but the pole was so insecurely fastened, the current so

strong, and big holes known to be just below the fording-place, it was not safe for him to remain in the wagon. After we were picked up on the other side, and as we were passing a running ditch, snap went our fastenings, though knotted and twisted five ropes thick, and again all our oxen were free, walking off a yard or two with our *tree*-dissel-boom, and trek chain. We were only 500 or 600 yards from our destination, the blacksmith's, but we had to sit in our ditch for another strapping together before we could make our not very triumphal entry into Newcastle.

CHAPTER XVI.

Another storm—A musical soirée round the camp-fire—Kafir attire—A frog Babel—The cattle disease of South Africa—Honeymooning on trek—Kafir candles—The Biggarsberg or Mud Mountain—How Kafirs hunt buck—Sunday's River—Ladysmith—John tells of a Kafir bridal custom—Blue Krantz—Romann's fate—Estcourt—Mooi River—Howick—Our last trek—Briar Ghyll—End.

8th March, Newcastle, 1 p.m.—It is a comfort to be here, although stuck ignominiously in a mud-hole. A store close at hand supplies us with new ropes wherewith to haul us out and convey us to the door of the blacksmith's shop, where we shall probably have to spend the next three or four days.

4 p.m.—My tent is up but swaying about in the rough wind, which is preluding a coming storm. Clouds black over hills,

thunder rolling, lightning flashing. We are literally on our hind wheels, the front ones, iron-work and all, being at the blacksmith's, blocks supporting the wagon instead; mosquitoes gathering in multitudes, ready for their nightly onslaught.

9th March.—We had a very severe thunder-storm last evening, lightning very vivid, and thunder deafening. The ground, which had dried from the hot sun and wind, after the morning's rain, again wet and disagreeable in tent, but as it ceased raining soon after getting into my bed I kept tolerably dry. The nights and early mornings are not so cold as on the Veldt. By way of enabling me to calm off quietly to sleep the man told me that the old gentleman with whom I had so dolefully discoursed on the shortness of fuel, had on his upward journey lost nine oxen out of a span of sixteen by one stroke of lightning close by, and that a short time ago, on the dreadful hill where we had been delayed so long, eight oxen had been killed in the same way, the driver and forelooper being both much injured. He added, to

comfort me, that our trek tow was a chain, and not the new kind of wire, twisted, Atlantic cable fashion, which attracts lightning so readily. I am glad to hear that that terrible hill-road is to be *blocked*, and all transport (or baggage) wagons are henceforth to go round by the Wakkerstrom route, chiefly because of the frightful strain upon the poor oxen, and the shocking scourgings and ill-treatment they receive to get them over the pass. This morning the wind is boisterous, the wagon shakes as if it must blow over, and my tent flaps about threateningly. The blacksmith says we shall be able to start on Saturday afternoon, and do the one trek to the first of the two or three rivers we shall have to cross, all very full from these storms, and we *may* have to wait at each for many days! The roads, we are warned, are execrable for over seventy miles, chiefly from mud. We need not dread that so much as the rocks and stones, or the narrow and deep sluits, for our trap is light, and our oxen are strong, mud therefore tells less upon us than upon the big buck-wagons.

We are to have a raisin loaf made for us at the baker's, and meat and bread ready for our start on Saturday.

10*th*.—We had a lovely moonlight night, and no rain. John has hopes from this that the rivers may be lower than when last we heard of them. This report has this morning been confirmed. I have put a patch over a hole in my tent to keep dogs and cats out, both of which try to get inside, puss even scrambling over my frail roof making dismal "miaux," and perfectly unscared by my loudly uttered "Shoo! shoo!" the usual cry of dismissal to such intruders in this country. To-day has been a very weary one, no books left, and I find I can borrow none. Concertina "going! going!" I wish almost I could add gone, only John would be inclined to weep at its loss. The boys have a select audience stretched around our camp-fire, listening to "Sweet spirit, hear my prayer!" "Beautiful Star! ar!" "Kathleen Mavourneen," interspersed with "Oh! Bob Ridley oh!" and "The King of the Cannibal Islands," a great favourite of theirs.

Various Kafirs keep passing us, driving wagons with horses or oxen, or carrying messages, &c., all clothed (or not clothed) very queerly. Legs are nearly always left bare, and from their colour and shine one might easily mistake them for rusty black trousers. Really black they are not. A shirt some only sport, others a coat, oftener military than civil. Some have caps, felt principally, and seldom without a feather or some ornamental object hanging around and about them. If no hat, a few quills and feathers stuck into their wool, or even bits of red flannel or ribbon knotted therein. Some carry their assegais or spears, or a knob-stick. They all leap, and jump, and "antic" along, shouting some Kafir song at the top of their voices, not wholly discordantly, but very monotonously. The words are probably bombastic enough. Judging by their warrior-like deportment, they are either chanting the praises of the immortal "I," or of some great doings, real or imaginary, of their tribe. The blacksmith's two Kafir assistants have amused me a good deal by the business-like manner which is in

such strange contrast to the savagery of their general appearance.

11*th*.—About 10 a.m. the wheels, &c., were brought, the front piece renewed and greatly strengthened, and surely strong enough now to carry us to Natal without needing further repairs, all done at a cost of 6*l*., making a total of 15*l*. for mendings *so far*, besides the agent's additional bill at Pretoria. The young man who had most to do with setting us on our wheels again kindly lent me the local papers, which had just arrived by the post-cart.

I ought not to part from Newcastle without giving some little account of it. It is built on a square, the houses, twenty-one in number, dotted about every here and there, seemingly regardless of order and method, yet the streets of the future may, in reality, be clearly defined. It boasts seven stores, one hotel, one court-house (post-office included), and one small, red-brick building, used as a church by the inhabitants, without a clergyman generally, but with one when kind fortune happens to bring him Newcastle way, where he is ever

sure of a warm welcome. Music the small congregation have in the shape of a harmonium, and a subscription list has been started to obtain funds to build a real church in the square. The post-carts from both sides arrive and depart weekly, usually trying, as far as is possible on these horrible roads, to time their coming together for the convenience of passengers and mails. All the time we were in Newcastle we could obtain neither fresh butter nor milk, but we had excellent meat, and white bread of the very best, with the real taste of bread from an English baker's shop about it.

Had one long trek of three hours before camping by moonlight. We were surrounded by grass fires, which give a weird air to our surroundings, lighting up the adjacent hills, and making those further off more frowningly dark than they otherwise would be. The moon, looking unutterably large, seems to take another and changeful tinge from the flickering firelight. The constant croaking of the frogs, a very insufficient word to describe the endless

variety of sounds produced by these untiring creatures, has become so much a part of our nightly experience, that I think I have not once named it, for the same reason that Londoners, born within the sound of Bow Bells, have been known never once to have visited St. Paul's; "they could do so any day." Perhaps the fires arouse the frogs, and they congregate to concert plans of safety; but certainly such a Babel of sounds was never heard in Frogdom elsewhere. None in the civilized or uncivilized world are left unimitated. The noisy streets of London, with every cry and call, from "Murder" and "Fire" to "Old Clo" and "Hot-cross buns," seem all shrieked at the same moment as it were by people in every stage of catarrh, or else so clearly and shrilly that the sounds might be coming from the tiny pipe of a child of five years old. All these can be distinctly recognized by the exercise of very little imaginative power. The uncivilized sounds are legion also—shouts and songs of Kafirs, lowing of oxen, cracking of whips, rumbling of groaning wagon-wheels, cries of birds,

beasts, &c. May not the South African frog be amongst reptiles what the mocking-bird is amongst its own species?

12*th March.*—Trekked from 5.30 to 7.40. Had breakfast, then from 10.10 to 2.30. Too long; two hours and a half being always a long-enough spell of work for the animals; but unless we had outspanned by the Gegane River, which we had crossed, we should have found no watering-place for them. We were ready to inspan again at 4.20, when the men on seeking the oxen found them not, they having, as their kind are so prone to do, wandered off for miles. Found at last, we started at six. Dusk soon set in, and the moon seemed to linger in its coming most provokingly, only lighting our way for the last half-hour. Jim has good eyes, and managed to tow us along with no more jolts than we should have had by day-light. Several wagons were outspanned by a turn of the Gegane River, resting, as I wish we could have done, for the Sunday. We forded one very stony rapid drift, name unknown, before coming to this one, by

which I write, about sixteen miles from Newcastle. One of these was the same poor wagon laden with skins which we had left sticking in the mud, just after one of our break-downs, before we crossed the Drachensberg. It had again come to grief and was deep in another mud-hole, as firmly planted as if to be there were its normal condition.

Tales are daily told us of oxen sick with the great disease of the country, the cause of which has yet to be discovered. It is believed to be either from something they eat or drink. Once the test was applied of giving them no grass food at all, whilst working between Maritzburg and Durban. The disease came to the abstainers therefrom equally with the grass-fed animals, so this leads one to believe the water to be more at fault. Cayenne pepper with garlic seems to be the first curative dose given. We consequently wish we had both, though we have still hope that Romann's ailing looks may threaten something less serious. We have come over very rough, steep places ever

since we left Newcastle, and it is well that we have been made stronger in every part of our vehicle, otherwise we must have broken down several times. No sooner have we climbed a precipice and descended its other side when another follows in quick succession, as if each tried to outdo the other in casting obstacles in our path. We have been through a great many spruits too to-day. Soon after starting we met a large camp of eight wagons, near one of which were seated a young man and maiden, she with locks flowing, and he with his arms around her waist, both apparently very happy and well amused. It was quite an Arcadian picture. As we drove by, the lady nodded her head to me, and then waved her broad hat by way of greeting. I fancy the young couple were a bride and bridegroom combining business with pleasure, i. e., spending a honeymoon, whilst conveying goods for a good round sum "up country."

In all we met twenty-two wagons before ten o'clock, a great contrast to the long solitary days we have spent meeting literally

no human being at all. The heat of the sun has been great. The sensation it gives is more that of being scorched than melted. We met also thirteen mounted police on their way to the Newcastle district. With these white-helmeted and nicely-uniformed men was one led horse bearing their food and cooking utensils. As we wended through one rather narrow pass with long, high feathery grass on either side, "Look at the avenue, Jim," I heard John say, and the comparison was by no means far-fetched. To me our driver added, "That grass the Kafirs use for candles. They gather bundles and dry them, and when they want to make their bed after dark they just light one, and then blow it out." By this it is evident that a Kafir's bed-making is a very short process.

At 11.30 we had crossed the Biggarsberg or Mud Mountain, rightly so named. Passing over one very rocky place we left another wagon in difficulties, its disabled wheel lying on the ground. A mile further on we met its driver, a white man, coming

at a brisk trot for oxen, seated on a wheel which he had gone far to borrow, placed flatwise on two pieces of wood, like sleigh-runners. A clever solution to his difficulty indeed.

Meeting some Kafirs flourishing their assegais, I inquired if they could kill bucks with them. The reply was that they did not go hunting singly, but in immense parties closing round a herd, confining it as if in a kraal, with human beings for its walls. The prisoners fall in numbers under showers of assegais skilfully thrown at them. At the foot of our last descent was the well laid-out and really nice-looking farm—chiefly for the growing of tobacco—of Mr. Knight—on the banks of Sunday's river. Trees, blue gum and others, once more soothed the eye. Crossed the river, rapid and rocky, but shallow. Observed notice boards put up, limiting outspanning places on the farm, the first of the kind we have seen. We had our tea on the other side, and then awaited the rising of the moon at about 8 p.m. A man, wife, and three children passed us, with all their goods piled

on a two-wheeled light cart drawn by two small horses, tandem fashion, the man leading them. They had actually walked the whole way from Maritzburg, and were going on to Newcastle! How wife and little ones could accomplish such a feat under a broiling sun, and with no shelter at night, I cannot imagine. There did not seem an inch of room left on the little trap even to place a child at the crossing of the various rivers. We trekked till eleven, and got to bed about twelve, very tired and sleepy. Bought a brown loaf for two shillings!

On the 14th we reached Ladysmith. This town is larger than Newcastle, and the houses are of a better stamp, with verandahs and nice, well-grown trees around them. The streets, too, are more clearly defined. Two good stone churches, one English with its little outside stone belfry, the other Dutch; several stores, one a good butcher's, where we have obtained both mutton and beef. 'Our two-shillings-and-ninepence-worth, fills a big dish altogether, but no weight was mentioned, that seemingly being considered quite unnecessary.

A nice-looking Kafir village adjoins Ladysmith, with church, schools, &c. On our way to it we saw three Kafir women or girls. One had literally nothing on but a deep fringe hanging loosely from her waist. Her hair, cut off flat to the back of her head, was piled on the top of it, like a battlement, and was daubed with red clay. This John said was to show that she was engaged to be married; that her intended husband had already paid two cows towards her price, and had more, probably eight, to get before he could claim her. The marriage ceremonies of the Kafirs are curious. John told me of one in which the bridegroom has to sit down with endless strings of beads around his waist and head. The bride elect dances about, brandishing knife or assegai, and on coming up to him she cleverly and rapidly inserts the knife under the strings of beads, cuts them and scatters them to the ground. This she does several times, and if he winces he is "no man," and not "worthy" to be her husband! Of course he does not wince, knowing her skill, and after paying so dearly he has an additional motive

to bear the trial unflinchingly. The maiden next dances off to the cattle kraal, and there points with her assegai the first time at one ox of her selection, then at another, both of which the husband has had to provide for the feast. Two goats also are thus chosen, and if in playful mood she dances herself into a hiding-place in her mother's house or tent, he has to give one more goat to get her out again. Once married she has no further fun. She must provide for herself, children, and husband, who probably has other wives. A rich "swell" of a Kafir often has twenty. If she should, after a bit, sicken of her bargain and return to her mother, the husband gets back all the animals he paid for her, oxen and goats included, and another husband may buy her for two cows! This does not often occur. Mother's love may be great, but to have to refund to so large an extent would test a Kafir woman to the uttermost.

Left Ladysmith at 3.15, trekking over better roads, which were being repaired by large numbers of Kafirs under white supervision, many of whom with their tents we have

lately noticed. At six we camped by the side of my sympathizing friend of the banks of the Newcastle River. He had left the town on the morning of the day we reached it. Although we were detained till Saturday evening, and he had a fair start, we have now overtaken him. Wagons also which passed us a clear week before, leaving us in our mud-hole, are, we are told, only just in front. Had we not been so delayed we should have got to Maritzburg much more quickly than many, for when we *do* trek, we trek well, going steadily forward.

We arrived on the banks of the Tugela by 8 a.m., and found our "stick-fast" friends just about to cross. Our turn in the punt would come next. I watched one loaded wagon, and forgetting that those oxen which went so unflinchingly on to the movable bridge had probably done so often before, felt quite easy as to our having no difficulty whatever. Alas! alas! Potbert had strong objections to such a mode of conveyance, and walked himself with one wheel of the wagon off the punt and into the mud and water

below. His brethren got into dire confusion on feeling that they were being dragged *somewhere*, disliking also the sound of their own feet upon the boards. With the many ready helpers around, the wagon was quickly freed from the oxen. Five were on the punt, but Potbert was left seated placidly where his stupidity had placed him until all hands had dragged the vehicle back to the road again, uninjured fortunately. I had had almost a spasm of horror as the vision came over me of another week by a blacksmith's shop, and another long bill of repairs! Colbert, too, took to misbehaving on the punt, refusing to be yoked. Ferry fees six shillings and sixpence.

We are now in the road direct to Maritzburg, from which the Newcastle route branches off, and which is old ground to us, as the scene of our unrivalled horse exhibitions on our way to the Transvaal ten months ago. I recognized the old landmarks at once. Mimosa-trees scattered everywhere, and these were quite a relief to the eye. So pleased was I to see them again that I was childishly

going up in the moonlight to *touch* one, and to stand under the branches of a real tree once more, when something glided away through the grass, doubtless a snake, from which I hopped aside after a most undignified fashion, with all my enthusiasm nipped unceremoniously in the bud.

We delayed for some time at Tugela River, John finding so many acquaintances among the various drivers and Kafirs of all sizes and sexes who came about us selling sugar-canes and Kafir beer, the girls coqueting as much like civilized girls as possible, and with a power of repartee, as one could judge by the roars of laughter following their replies, for which I was quite unprepared, from the many stolid specimens of Kafir females I had seen at Eersteling. In one of the spruits through which we had passed safely yesterday, a man, his wife, and two children, with their horses, were all drowned very lately. Here too we were told of Mr. Hill's mishaps since he left Eersteling on September 29th. He had three large wagons, and it seems had sent on his passengers by one route, going

by Greytown himself to take a load of coal. His route took him on the other side of the lion Veldt through which we passed. The lions killed two of his oxen, mangling and wounding two more. Later on, nearer Greytown, two of his Kafirs were killed while excavating coal, and two more of his men were injured whilst trying to rescue them.

At 2.30 p.m. we crossed the Blue Krantz River, which is a rapid one when full, although to-day it was shallow enough. Travellers are often detained on its banks for two and three weeks before they can ford it. It is a lovely spot, and under brighter circumstances I could spend many pleasant hours amongst its gay flowers and shrubs, its many fine gladiolas, and its wild zineas, which lighted up the roadside brightly, like poppies amongst our corn-fields at home. One flower struck me especially. It was of a pale yellow tint, very like our primrose in form, though with a stem more nearly resembling the polyanthus, and with little or no leaf. Something of a cross between the jessamine and primrose. The wild clematis or what I took for it,

though of a finer kind than ours, scrambled over every bush and shrub, making fairy bowers in unexpected nooks everywhere. My little pencil stump will only grave words upon my tumbled old note-book, but not one of the lovely pictures which my eyes dwell upon, never to forget, will it venture to sketch for you.

Poor Romann is very bad!—"Missus, he'll die on the road. We'll have to leave him at Blue Krantz." I remonstrate, being loath to do so. "Get him on to Mooi River, if you can," I entreat, thinking he might be fetched from there more easily than from this greater distance should he recover, a possibility over which John shakes his head dubiously. We had barely reached the second and last house of the little settlement when it was evident that he could go no further. At this farm John inquires if Romann can be received upon the usual terms. Answer being favourable, I drew up a kind of agreement with quite a legal smack about it. The people probably could not read, but they would like it all the better for not understanding

a word of it. "Should the poor beast live they could on delivery claim threepence a day for his hospital fees, or should he die, his skin would belong to them." Poor Romann's fate will be decided in a day or two at farthest. I say "poor" if he lives, but "happy Romann" if he dies, for he will never know whip or trek-tow more. The loss is ours, but we may think ourselves very fortunate if we save five out of the six oxen, when many lose a whole span, one after another, as if a pestilence had seized them.

Being eager to push on, we trekked till long after dark, the moon rising late. Something must have gone wrong in a narrow steep spruit, for in the glimmering light I saw all the oxen loose, but as John and Jim, when they had done yelling "Ah, now! ah, now!" &c., were joking and whistling as they inspanned again, I did not even ask what it was all about. A little further on we met three heavy buck-wagons. It was well they were not even a few minutes earlier, or they would have been down upon us in the spruit, for the cutting was steep and narrow, and at

a bend, quite hiding us from view even by daylight.

16*th*. *Estcourt*.—We hurried away after a short rest from this place, where we had spent such a weary waiting time on our upward journey—my poor invalid shrinking from seeing even the friends who had been very kind to us then; Mr. Paterson, the magistrate, his very amiable wife, and Mr. Smith, the clergyman, who had shown us so much attention, and in whose prospected church he had felt so warm an interest. I did not like to leave him even to shake hands with them, much as I wished to do so. John had seen a huge snake in the spruit by which we breakfasted when here before, and I looked carefully about me before I turned washer-woman therein, to-day. My earlier notes of Estcourt were rather meagre, if I remember aright, and possibly of somewhat bilious hue, from the state of chronic ill-temper to which I was reduced by the procrastination of that dreamy blacksmith, and the torpor which had seemed to seize every one who had even to drive in a repairing nail in our service.

By way of treating this promising town more fairly, I will leave my jottings of to-day intact. . . . Fairly off at 10 p.m. Over hill after hill, some very steep; but the roads are much better than those to which we have grown accustomed. A great hurricane of wind, clouds of dust, eyes, mouth, hair, all full. As I gazed down, when the dust permitted, upon Estcourt from the heights above it, I was much struck with its really beautiful situation, and many signs of present and future well-being. It is surrounded by hills, and is fairly wooded. It has two rivers, looking like silver threads every here and there, stealing through it. It has a good bridge of stone, iron, and wood. It has its court-house, stores, hotels, and it has new barracks. What more need I add to assure you that "Estcourt" deserves to be printed in big capitals in the next new map of Natal?

To-day the tents gleaming like white specks below us, and the groups of Kafirs washing in the streams added to its general picturesqueness.

"Do you know what this thing is, missus?" asks John, as he brings to the back of the wagon upon his whip a curious-looking object, which might have been a miniature crocodile, but for its shaded green tint. I know it to be a chameleon, for it is not the first of its species I have seen; but I do not say so, as John likes to be the first to show anything of interest.

Have I noted anywhere previously the primitive method used by the forelooper to check the too hasty progress of his oxen down hill? To-day I thought Jim must have been run over ever so many times, but he was much too agile for such a fate. He literally throws dust into their eyes, picking up handfuls of it, and sometimes clots of mud, which he showers between their horns, as they run. The leaders understand it, and its result is nearly equivalent to that produced by the drag.

We have seen no bucks for some time, and fewer cranes of late; but those ecclesiastical-looking birds, the white-chokered crows, abound.

The post-cart passes us, and jokes are bandied between its driver and ours. "That fellow is awfully cheeky, missus! he says he'll give me 5*l.* for our wagon!"

It is dusk before we come to the really fine bridge at the entrance to Mooi River, built by General Bissett, sometime Governor of Natal. Colbert again objects to a wooden road, but in less degree than before. . . . . The thunder rolls and threatens, and my tent to-night is nearly blown about my ears, the pegs failing to get a good hold of the soil.

We had camped close to our old hotel quarters here, and although we had no visitors the boys had plenty, and kept the ball rolling of fun and frolic, music and songs until quite a late hour, the whole company being tightly packed amongst the pots and kettles, spare reims, and sundries under the wagon itself, one after another taking it in turn to act stoker to the fire, which the heavy drops seem determined to quench.

17*th.* — A steady drizzle, real English weather, persistently damps us body and soul to-day. One gets spoilt in this fine clime for

such old-world wettings. The skies seem very hard upon us here, when they grey cloak themselves, and hide their bonnie blue garb of every-day wear, and like spoilt children we cry out as if we were ill-used. It is almost our last day on trek, too, so I cheer up as much as I can, and try to see only the silvery lining to every cloud overhead.

We reach Howick at 8 p.m. on Saturday the 18th. The bridge, which after many failures, is accomplished at last, is a very good one, and adds much to the beauty as well as importance of the place, which is altogether much grown and improved since we saw it in June last. It looks more like a good-sized English country village than an embryo town of this South African colony. We had then seen a picturesque-looking old building, half castle, half house, and had admired it and a situation greatly. Now it has its verandah and turrets painted in bright colours, and a general "spick and span" air quite out of keeping with the grey old battlements it adjoins. A board informs travellers that it is the "Castle Hotel," and this accounts for the

transformation with which I am so inclined to quarrel.

Nothing can deprive it of its natural beauties. Its surroundings are fine old trees, climbing plants, rocks, and the flowing waters winding beneath, murmuring dreamily and pleasantly. A rare retreat for the lover of nature, alike for the world-weary mind and brain as for the young and gay. How merrily do those dancing ripples seem to sing as they rush joyously on to the fall below! and for the sadder-hearted have they not a melancholy cadence, a minor key utterance attuned to the load of pain within. Has not Nature moods as we have, or do we only interpret her after our own?

We bid adieu to Howick, its lovely wayside flowers, its rushing waters, and start upon the very last trek of this our long, long journey of six and a half weeks; down the town hill, passing numberless wagons as we go; Maritzburg, nestled beneath, smiles us a welcome now, in March, as it smiled us a God-speed in June last year; but we do not, as at first planned, go into the town at once.

We outspan on the sward outside, there to await the verdict of such momentous import to us both. . . .

Here, then, at beautiful Briar Ghyll—where the hope which had sustained me for so long has died utterly away, where so many kind hands in active friendship have grasped mine in my sorrow, lifting the burden of responsibility which had well-nigh overweighted me, have advised me, helped me—at Briar Ghyll, then, let me drop the curtain, for it is here so sadly ends the tale of our trek in the Transvaal.

* * * *

Although my tale is ended, and my last page somewhat blurred in the telling, yet a fair new leaf has just been turned for the Transvaal. It tells of old discords healed, fears allayed, anxieties set at rest, strength taking the place of weakness, and substance that of shadow. The Transvaal has lost the name of an independence it could not maintain, but it has gained in its place the security ensured by the protection of a great power, and "the prestige which so large a political

relationship confers." Who does not know what Old England can do for her children? and do they not, one and all, love to call her "mother" at last, however shy each may have been when first she owned them as one of her brood?

To whom better, or half so well, could have been entrusted the delicate task of bringing all this to pass—this intricate mission, with its Kafir as well as its Dutch complications—than to the Queen's High Commissioner, His Excellency Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the old friend, alike of the few who still cling to the forlorn hope of self-government unaided by England, as of the many and wiser who recognize their only safety to be from England? And to the Kafirs, who could better be sent than he, who has been so aptly described as "their own King of Hearts?"

My heart, I know, is full of gratitude for deeds of kindness shown me when I needed them most; for words uttered, when they fell as balm upon an open wound, and for hospitality, extended by him and his without stint.

Therefore there is an added fervency to the Amen, with which I warmly and reverently respond to the prayer uttered by so many who know and love him, and who care for the welfare of South Africa and her colonies: "God bless the new Administrator of the Transvaal, and give a happy and prosperous future to this new sister country of ours, which he will so wisely and temperately govern!"

* * * *

P.S.—A lady's letter is generally supposed never to be quite complete without a postscript; its, "By the way, I have never mentioned," &c.; "After all, I have forgotten to thank you," &c., &c. Her postscript need not necessarily be the kernel to her nut, but still to despatch her missive without transcribing her after-thoughts would certainly leave her with an uncomfortable sense of omitted duty, even although the friend who receives it might not only fail to observe that anything was left unsaid upon the four sides of the sombre-hued rep sheet of note-paper with its bright monogram at the top, but might even be cruel enough to hint that three

sides would have amply sufficed for all her dearest Euthanasia had to say to her!

If, then, Euthanasia may have a postscript to her letter, pray may I not have one to my book?

In mine I would fain record my thanks for their aid in setting me right, now and again, where I was a little at fault in actual fact, date, or detail, where they confirmed any of my little "by the ways," or suggested anything, any way, or any where, by which my pages have become in any degree more readable than they might otherwise have been,—first of all to Mr. Silver, whose most admirable handbook on the Transvaal is indispensable to every one who intends to visit it; secondly, to Dr. Mann, who is a well-known authority upon all that appertains to South Africa; and last, but not least, to the writers of two most interesting papers read before meetings of the Royal Colonial Institute, in 1869 and 1875, i. e. Mr. H. J. Barrett and Mr. T. B. Glanville. To Mr. Barrett my thanks are more especially due for the confirmation he gave then to facts which have

been told me since, and which but for the sanction of such a high authority, I should have been somewhat afraid to relate, lest they should be treated only with the incredulous indulgence granted to so-called "travellers' tales."

And may not trusty John have his thanks too? for, oh! what would my book have been without his, "Would missus like to hear about—?" and "Shall I tell missus how the—?" &c., &c.

I am sensible of one or two omissions also. Finding that my book was outgrowing the limits I had assigned to it, I removed the original Chapter XII., which contained an account of a trip we took to the Government Forests of the Haupt Busch Berg, and thus have involuntarily done an injustice to the Transvaal and some of its grander natural products. Let me remedy my fault now, thus late in the day, by stating that in these noble forests there is wood and to spare, notably the yellow-wood tree (some of those we saw measured twenty-one feet in circumference, and forty feet from base to crown),

the Sneeze-wood, the iron-wood, &c., &c. But I shall be attempting to condense my much-regretted missing chapter into a post-script if I allow my mind to wander back to the bewildering beauties of that grand scene amidst the kloofs and gorges, the ascents and declivities, the rugged mountain sides and softer glades of the bountifully endowed higher lands of the Transvaal.

Upon the healthiness of the country (and excepting in a few of its lower lands, whose limits are well defined, it is exceptionally healthy) I have not laid sufficient stress. Let me emphasize, then, any and every statement I may have made, and recommend this part of South Africa, in common with its sisters, Natal and the Cape, as a safe haven for any who may be threatened with weak lungs, or dread that fell disease consumption. Nor let any intending visitors to the colony be daunted by anything I may have related of the difficulties of the way. Our circumstances were exceptional ones; and, moreover, the great change which has already worked such wonders for the Transvaal will affect

traffic, transit, prices, &c., and smooth the way to others which was somewhat of the roughest to ourselves.

Before leaving England, seek information from those best able to give it, is my advice to you who mean to visit our South African Colonies:—apply to Mr. J. G. Rolls, of 79, Coleman Street, who can tell you how ready are their Governments to aid new comers, and how best to claim that help on both sides the ocean; and an hour in Mr. Silver's warehouse will fit you simply or sumptuously, as you may desire, but certainly comfortably and sufficiently to meet all your needs, should you, following in our steps, think of starting "On Trek in the Transvaal."

THE END.

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